MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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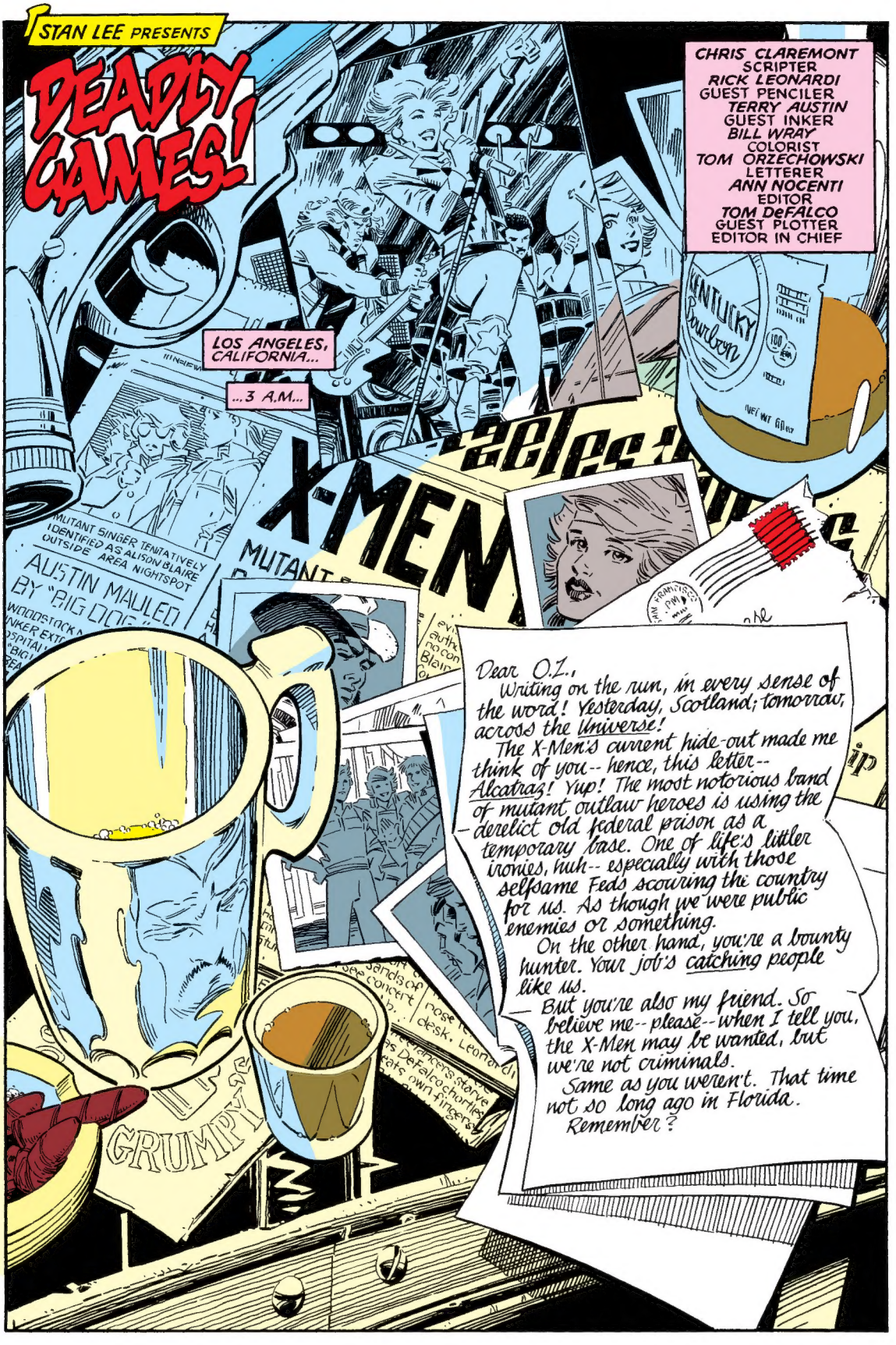
LEONARDI 1987
IN MEMORIAM



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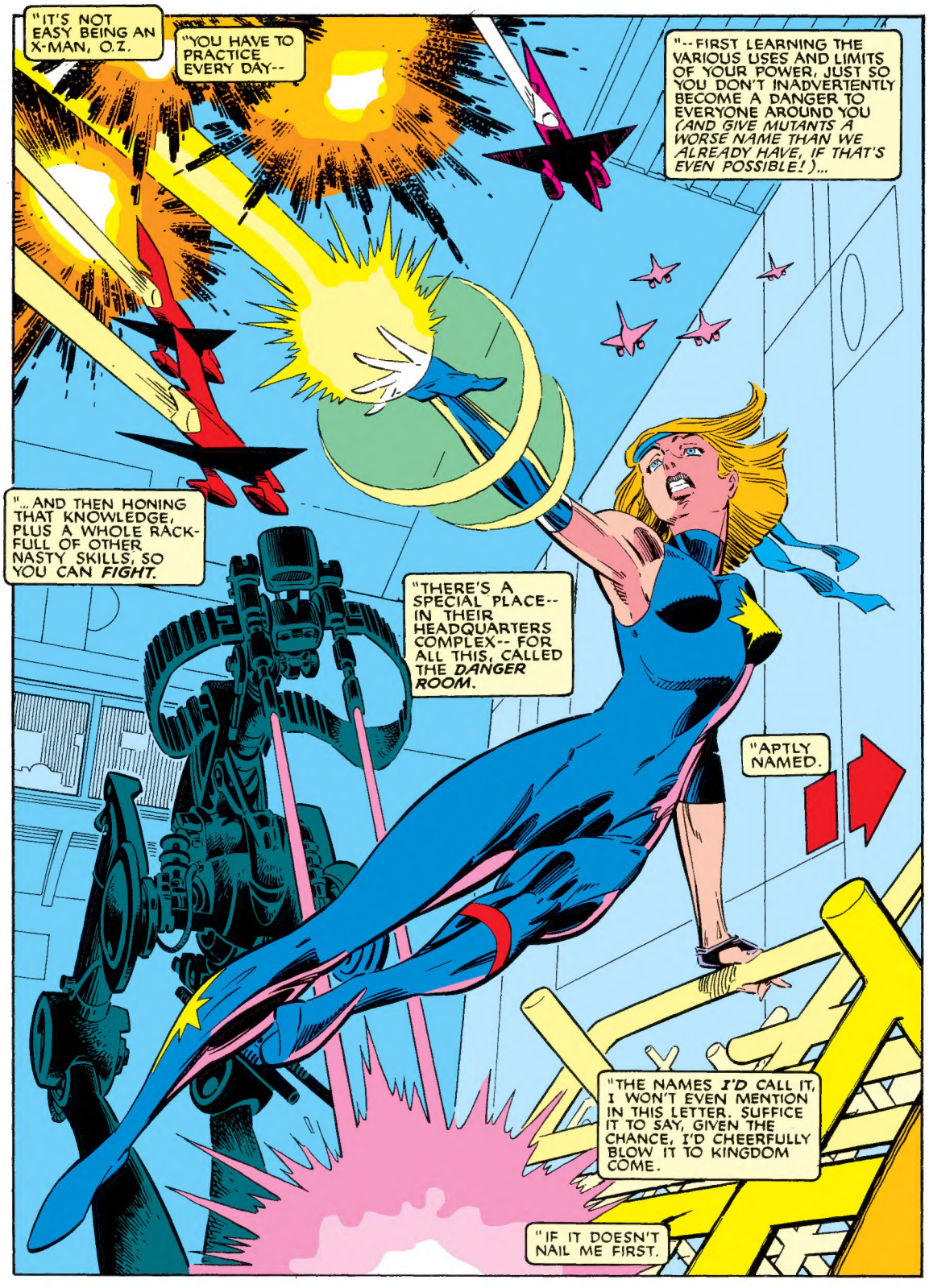
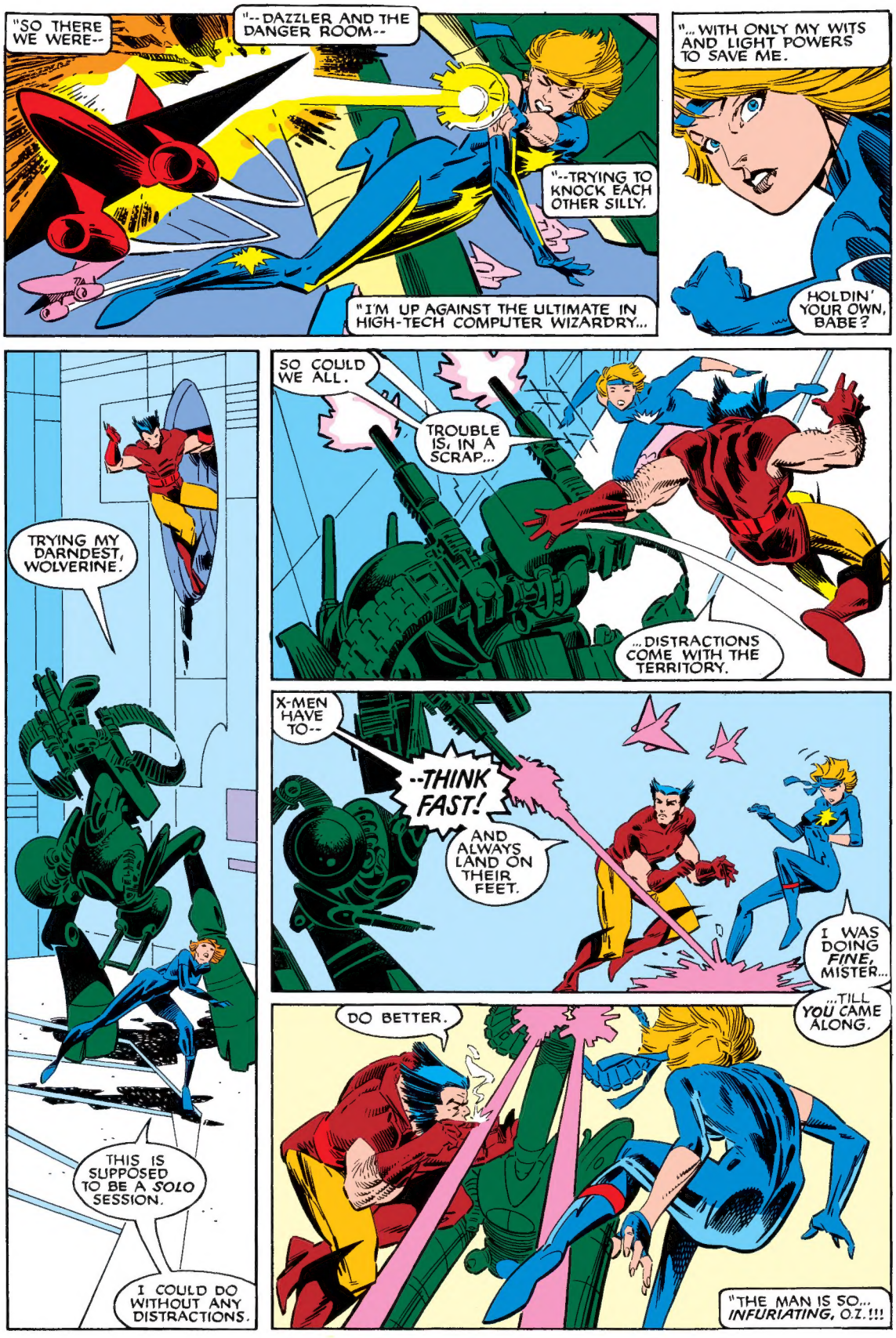
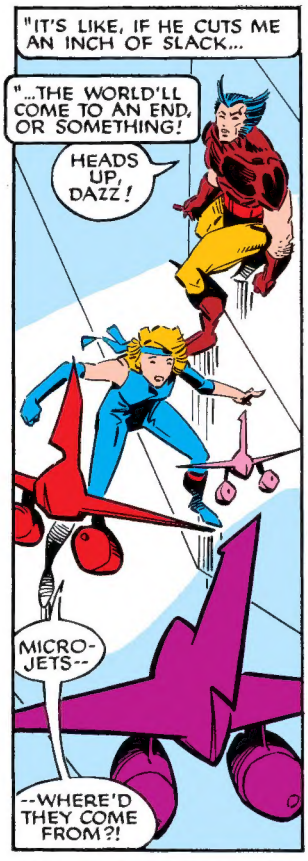
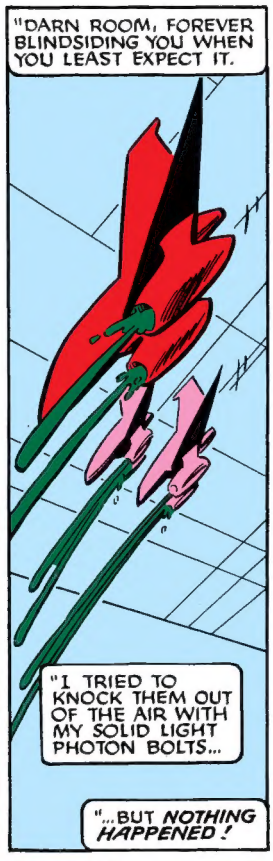
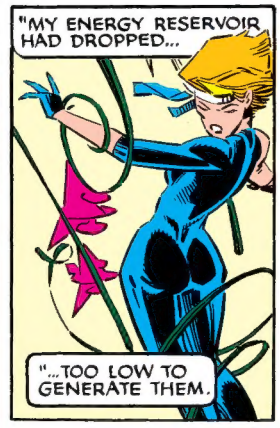

"IT'S NOT EASY BEING AN X-MAN, O.Z.
"YOU HAVE TO PRACTICE EVERY DAY--
"--FIRST LEARNING THE VARIOUS USES AND LIMITS OF YOUR POWER, JUST SO YOU DON'T INADVERTENTLY BECOME A DANGER TO EVERYONE AROUND YOU (AND GIVE MUTANTS A WORSE NAME THAN WE ALREADY HAVE, IF THAT'S EVEN POSSIBLE!)...
"...AND THEN HONING THAT KNOWLEDGE, PLUS A WHOLE RACK-FULL OF OTHER NASTY SKILLS, SO YOU CAN FIGHT.
"THERE'S A SPECIAL PLACE-- IN THEIR HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX-- FOR ALL THIS, CALLED THE DANGER ROOM.
"APTLY NAMED.
"THE NAMES I'D CALL IT, I WON'T EVEN MENTION IN THIS LETTER. SUFFICE IT TO SAY, GIVEN THE CHANCE, I'D CHEERFULLY BLOW IT TO KINGDOM COME.
"IF IT DOESN'T NAIL ME FIRST.

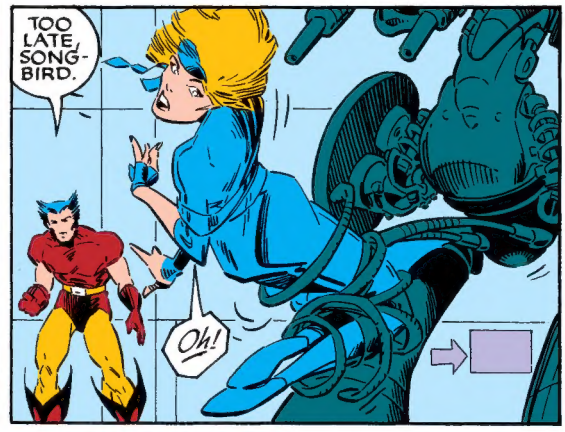

"SO THERE WE WERE--
"-- DAZZLER AND THE DANGER ROOM--
"--TRYING TO KNOCK EACH OTHER SILLY.
"I'M UP AGAINST THE ULTIMATE IN HIGH-TECH COMPUTER WIZARDRY...
"... WITH ONLY MY WITS AND LIGHT POWERS TO SAVE ME.
HOLDIN' YOUR OWN, BABE?
TRYING MY DARNDEST, WOLVERINE.
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A SOLO SESSION.
I COULD DO WITHOUT ANY DISTRACTIONS.
SO COULD WE ALL.
TROUBLE IS, IN A SCRAP...
...DISTRACTIONS COME WITH THE TERRITORY.
X-MEN HAVE TO--
--THINK FAST!
AND ALWAYS LAND ON THEIR FEET.
I WAS DOING FINE, MISTER...
...TILL YOU CAME ALONG.
DO BETTER.
"THE MAN IS SO... INFURIATING, O.Z.!!!

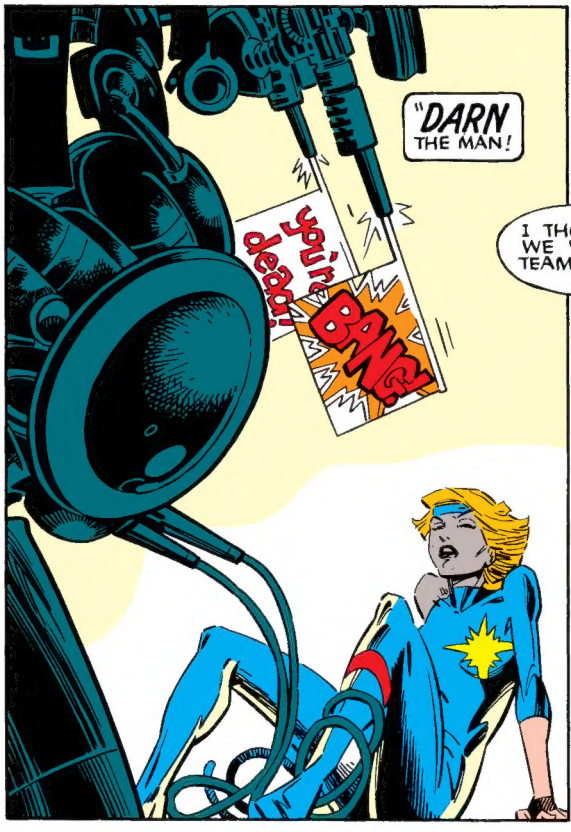

"IT'S LIKE, IF HE CUTS ME AN INCH OF SLACK...
"...THE WORLD'LL COME TO AN END, OR SOMETHING!
HEADS UP, DAZZ!
MICRO-JETS--
--WHERE'D THEY COME FROM?!


"DARN ROOM, FOREVER BLINDSIDING YOU WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT.
"I TRIED TO KNOCK THEM OUT OF THE AIR WITH MY SOLID LIGHT PHOTON BOLTS...
"...BUT NOTHING HAPPENED!

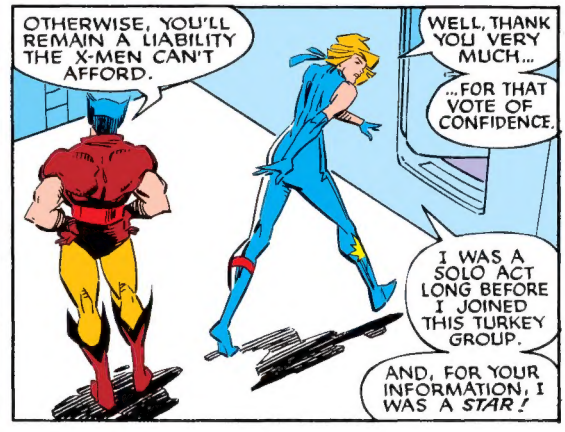

"MY ENERGY RESERVOIR HAD DROPPED...
"...TOO LOW TO GENERATE THEM.

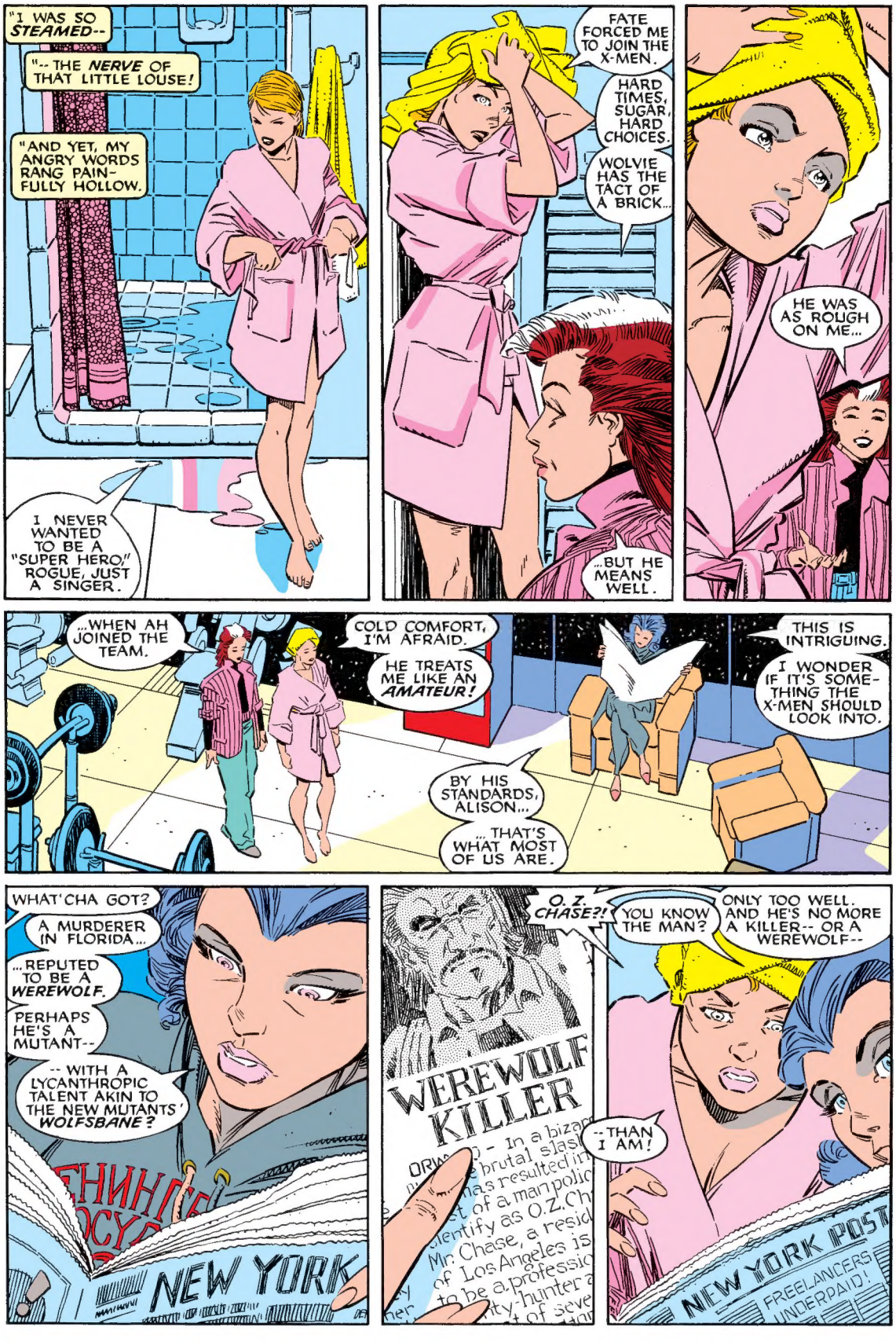
WOLVERINE, HELP!
CUT ME LOOSE!!

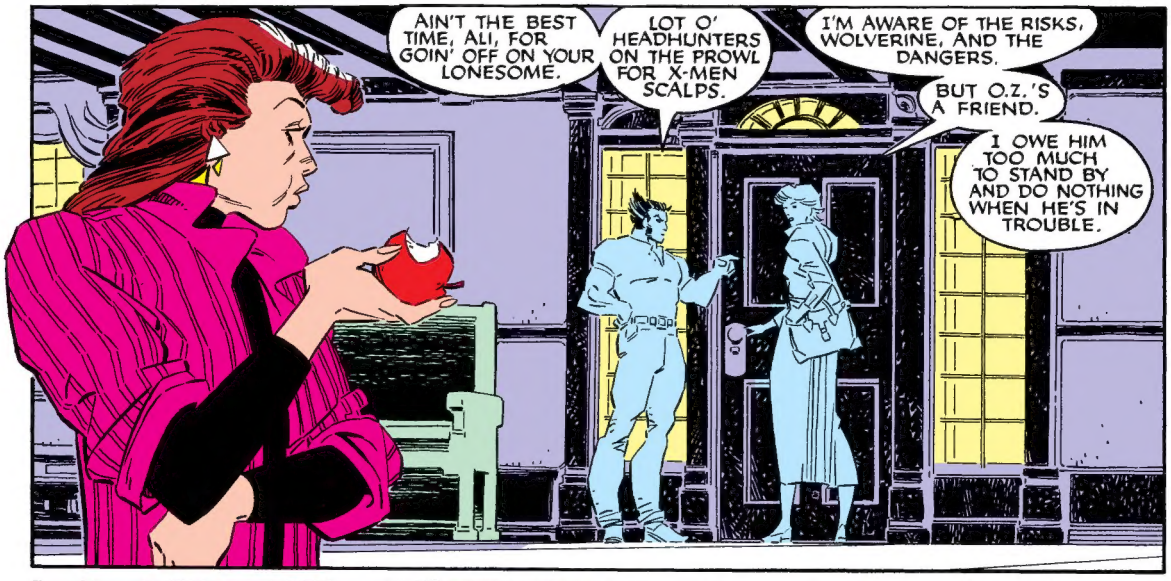

TOO LATE, SONG-BIRD.
Oh!

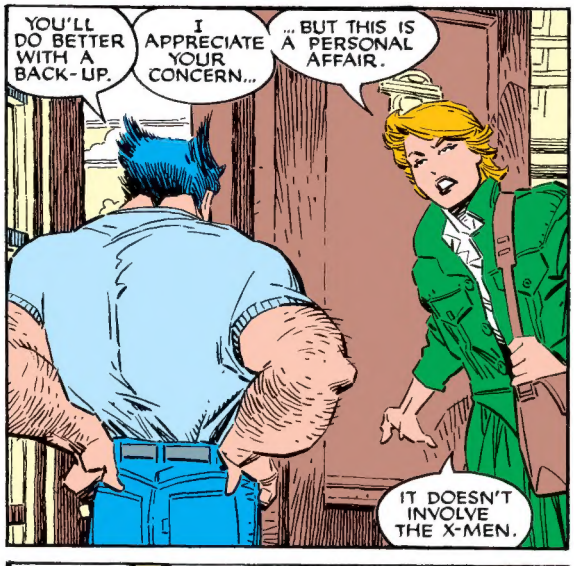

"DARN THE MAN!
you're dead!
BANG!

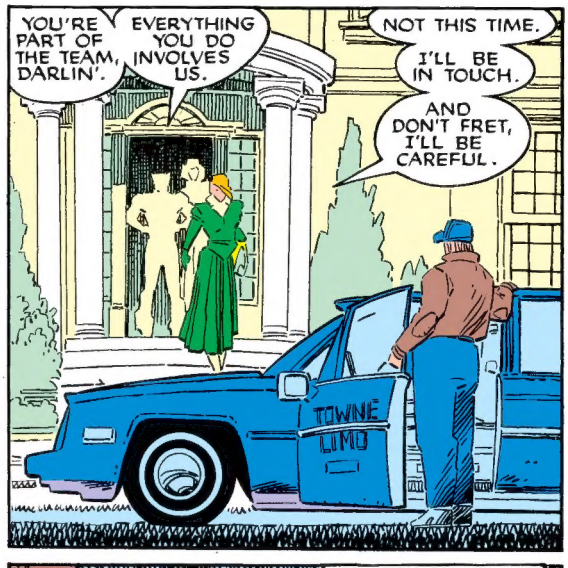
YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO STAND ON YOUR OWN FIRST.
I THOUGHT WE WERE TEAMMATES!
WHY DIDN'T YOU LEND A HAND?!

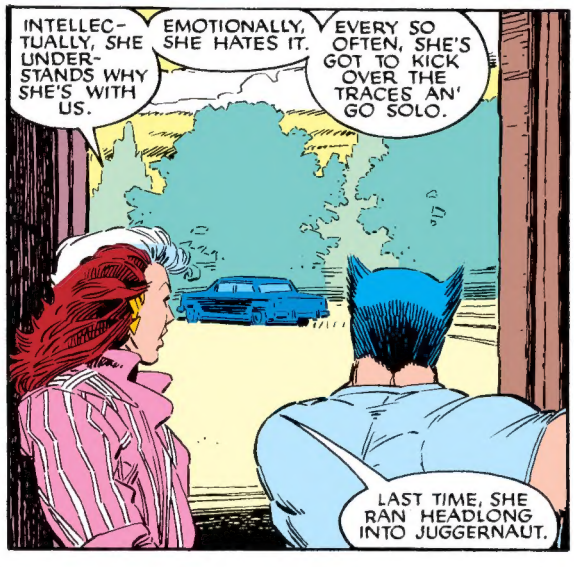

OTHERWISE, YOU'LL REMAIN A LIABILITY THE X-MEN CAN'T AFFORD.
WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH...
...FOR THAT VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.
I WAS A SOLO ACT LONG BEFORE I JOINED THIS TURKEY GROUP.
AND, FOR YOUR INFORMATION, I WAS A STAR!

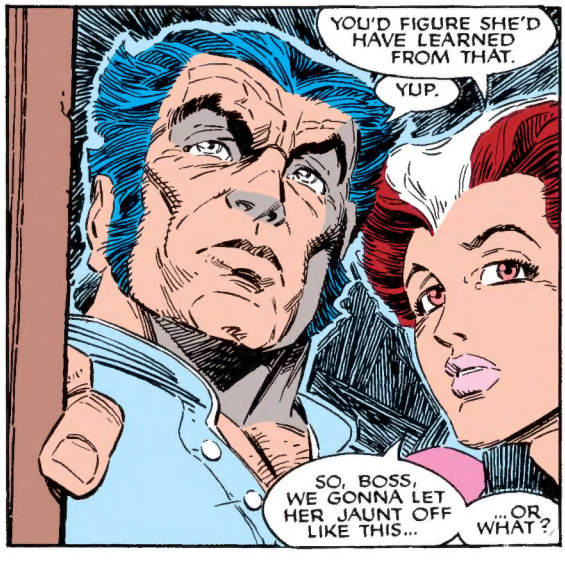

"I WAS SO STEAMED--
"-- THE NERVE OF THAT LITTLE LOUSE!
"AND YET, MY ANGRY WORDS RANG PAINFULLY HOLLOW.
I NEVER WANTED TO BE A "SUPER HERO," ROGUE, JUST A SINGER.
FATE FORCED ME TO JOIN THE X-MEN.
HARD TIMES, SUGAR, HARD CHOICES.
WOLVIE HAS THE TACT OF A BRICK...
...BUT HE MEANS WELL.
HE WAS AS ROUGH ON ME...
...WHEN AH JOINED THE TEAM.
COLD COMFORT, I'M AFRAID.
HE TREATS ME LIKE AN AMATEUR!
THIS IS INTRIGUING.
I WONDER IF IT'S SOMETHING THE X-MEN SHOULD LOOK INTO.
BY HIS STANDARDS, ALISON...
... THAT'S WHAT MOST OF US ARE.
WHAT'CHA GOT?
A MURDERER IN FLORIDA...
...REPUTED TO BE A WEREWOLF.
PERHAPS HE'S A MUTANT--
-- WITH A LYCANTHROPIC TALENT AKIN TO THE NEW MUTANTS' WOLFSBANE?
NEW YORK
O.Z. CHASE?!
YOU KNOW THE MAN?
ONLY TOO WELL. AND HE'S NO MORE A KILLER-- OR A WEREWOLF--
WEREWOLF KILLER
--THAN I AM!
NEW YORK POST
FREELANCERS UNDERPAID!

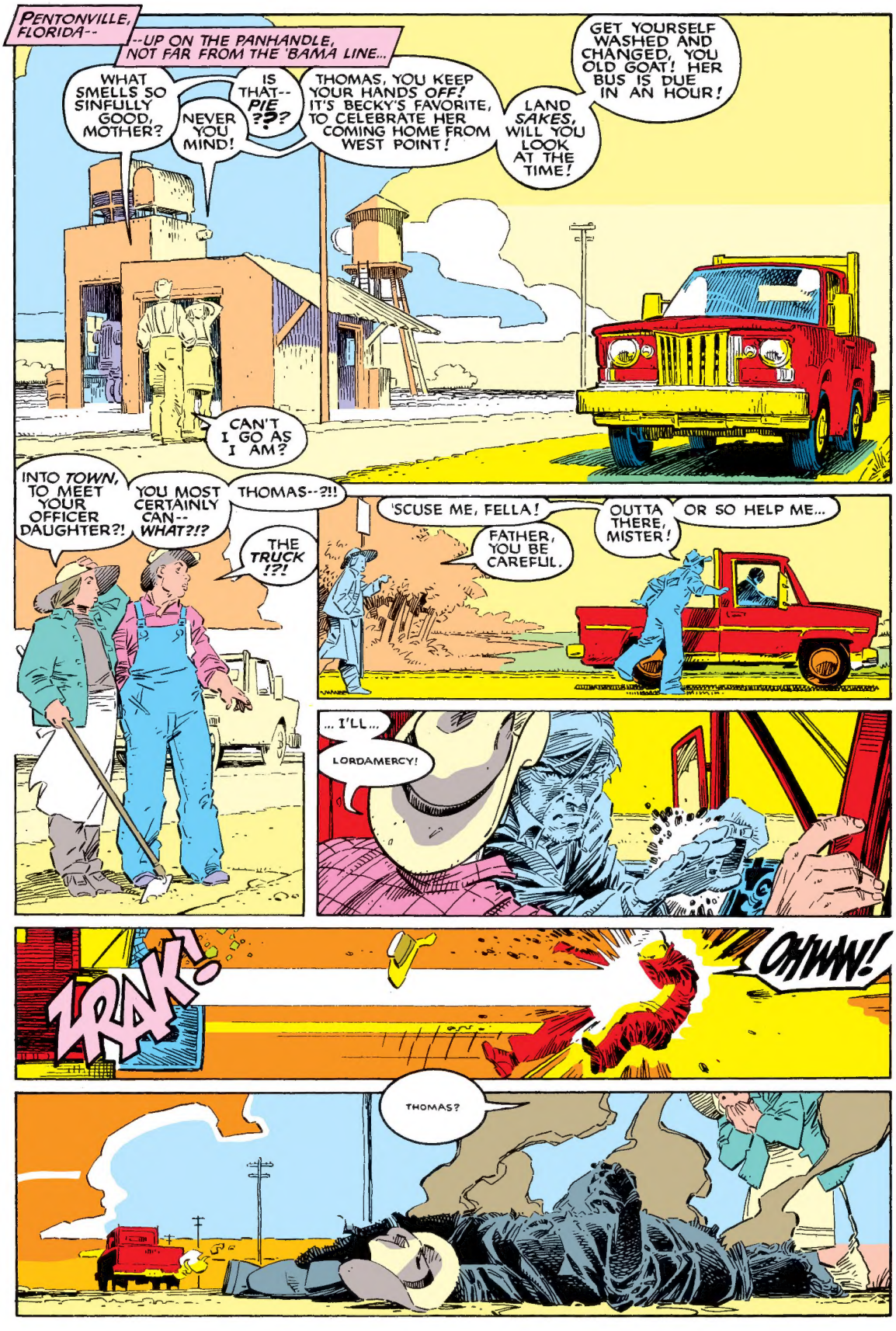

AIN'T THE BEST TIME, ALI, FOR GOIN' OFF ON YOUR LONESOME.
LOT O' HEADHUNTERS ON THE PROWL FOR X-MEN SCALPS.
I'M AWARE OF THE RISKS, WOLVERINE, AND THE DANGERS.
BUT O.Z.'S A FRIEND.
I OWE HIM TOO MUCH TO STAND BY AND DO NOTHING WHEN HE'S IN TROUBLE.

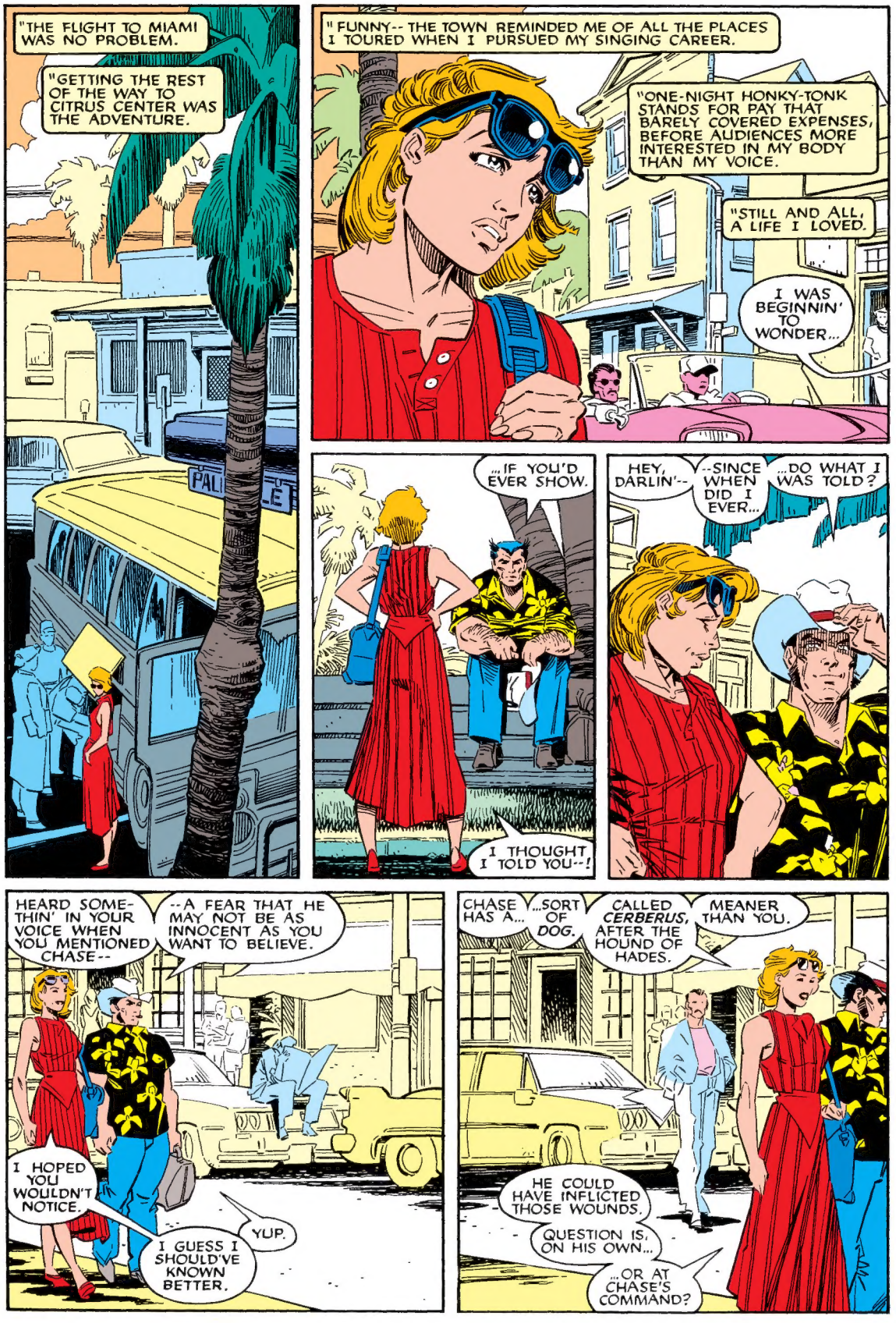

YOU'LL DO BETTER WITH A BACK-UP.
I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN...
...BUT THIS IS A PERSONAL AFFAIR.
IT DOESN'T INVOLVE THE X-MEN.

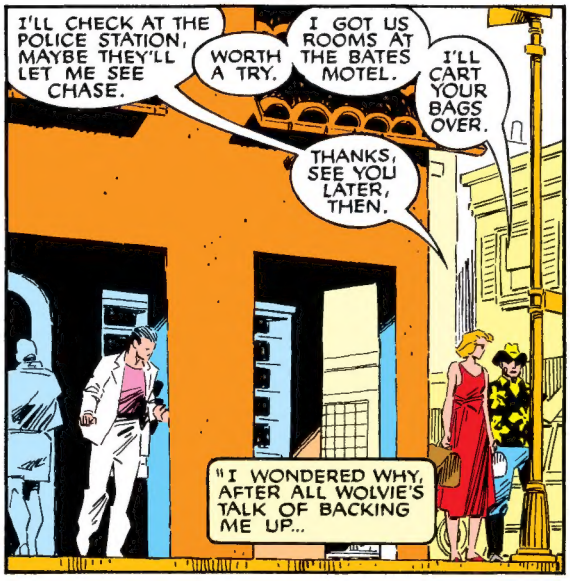

YOU'RE PART OF THE TEAM, DARLIN'.
EVERYTHING YOU DO INVOLVES US.
NOT THIS TIME.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.
AND DON'T FRET, I'LL BE CAREFUL.
TOWNE LIMO


INTELLECTUALLY, SHE UNDERSTANDS WHY SHE'S WITH US.
EMOTIONALLY, SHE HATES IT.
EVERY SO OFTEN, SHE'S GOT TO KICK OVER THE TRACES AN' GO SOLO.
LAST TIME, SHE RAN HEADLONG INTO JUGGERNAUT.


YOU'D FIGURE SHE'D HAVE LEARNED FROM THAT.
YUP.
SO, BOSS, WE GONNA LET HER JAUNT OFF LIKE THIS...
...OR WHAT?

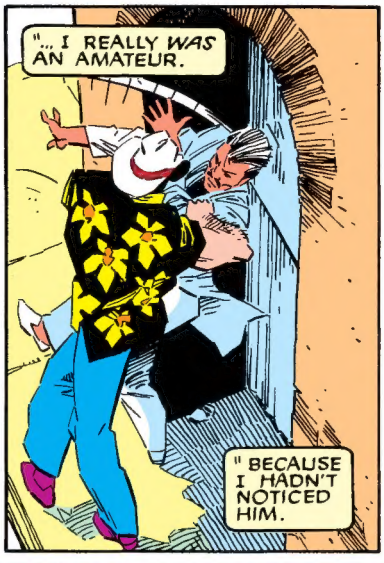

PENTONVILLE, FLORIDA--
--UP ON THE PANHANDLE, NOT FAR FROM THE 'BAMA LINE...
WHAT SMELLS SO SINFULLY GOOD, MOTHER?
NEVER YOU MIND!
IS THAT-- PIE ??!
THOMAS, YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF! IT'S BECKY'S FAVORITE, TO CELEBRATE HER COMING HOME FROM WEST POINT!
LAND SAKES, WILL YOU LOOK AT THE TIME!
GET YOURSELF WASHED AND CHANGED, YOU OLD GOAT! HER BUS IS DUE IN AN HOUR!
CAN'T I GO AS I AM?
INTO TOWN, TO MEET YOUR OFFICER DAUGHTER?!
YOU MOST CERTAINLY CAN-- WHAT?!?
THOMAS--?!!
THE TRUCK !?!
'SCUSE ME, FELLA!
FATHER, YOU BE CAREFUL.
OUTTA THERE, MISTER!
OR SO HELP ME...
... I'LL...
LORDAMERCY!
ZRAK!
OHWW!
THOMAS?


"THE FLIGHT TO MIAMI WAS NO PROBLEM.
"GETTING THE REST OF THE WAY TO CITRUS CENTER WAS THE ADVENTURE.
"FUNNY-- THE TOWN REMINDED ME OF ALL THE PLACES I TOURED WHEN I PURSUED MY SINGING CAREER.
"ONE-NIGHT HONKY-TONK STANDS FOR PAY THAT BARELY COVERED EXPENSES, BEFORE AUDIENCES MORE INTERESTED IN MY BODY THAN MY VOICE.
"STILL AND ALL, A LIFE I LOVED.
I WAS BEGINNIN' TO WONDER...
...IF YOU'D EVER SHOW.
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU--!
HEY, DARLIN'--
--SINCE WHEN DID I EVER...
...DO WHAT I WAS TOLD?
HEARD SOMETHIN' IN YOUR VOICE WHEN YOU MENTIONED CHASE--
--A FEAR THAT HE MAY NOT BE AS INNOCENT AS YOU WANT TO BELIEVE.
I HOPED YOU WOULDN'T NOTICE.
I GUESS I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER.
YUP.
CHASE HAS A...
...SORT OF DOG.
CALLED CERBERUS, AFTER THE HOUND OF HADES.
MEANER THAN YOU.
HE COULD HAVE INFLICTED THOSE WOUNDS.
QUESTION IS, ON HIS OWN...
...OR AT CHASE'S COMMAND?


I'LL CHECK AT THE POLICE STATION, MAYBE THEY'LL LET ME SEE CHASE.
WORTH A TRY.
I GOT US ROOMS AT THE BATES MOTEL.
I'LL CART YOUR BAGS OVER.
THANKS, SEE YOU LATER, THEN.
"I WONDERED WHY, AFTER ALL WOLVIE'S TALK OF BACKING ME UP...

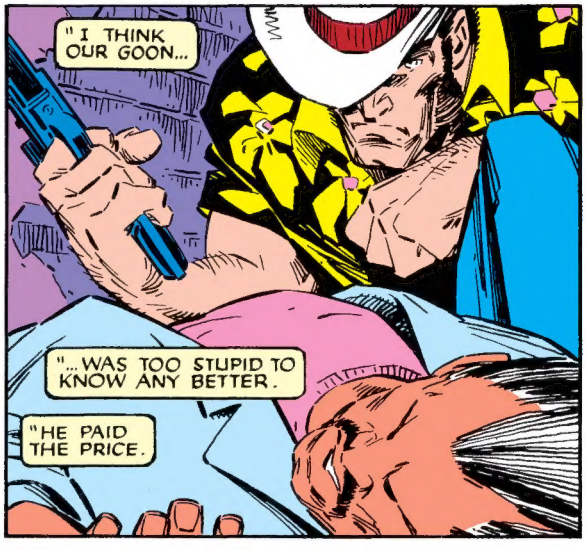
"... HE WAS SUDDENLY SO EAGER TO LEAVE ME?
"I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED, HE WAS A SECRET AGENT LONG BEFORE HE BECAME AN X-MAN.

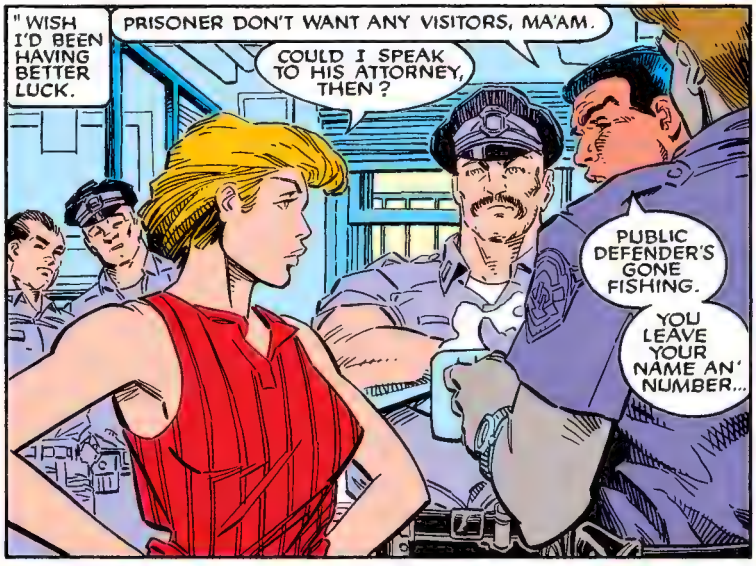
"HE'D SPOTTED OUR 'TAIL' THE MOMENT THE MAN STARTED FOLLOWING US.
"I SUPPOSE, IN THOSE DAYS, IN THAT SENSE...

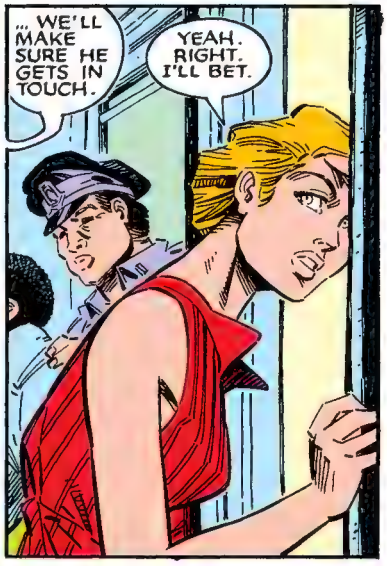

"... I REALLY *WAS* AN AMATEUR.
"BECAUSE I HADN'T NOTICED HIM.

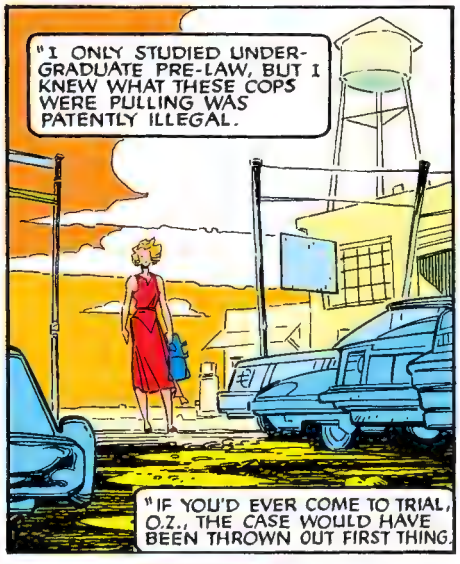
GOT A NAME, BUB?
AND A REASON FOR PLAYIN' OUR SHADOW?!

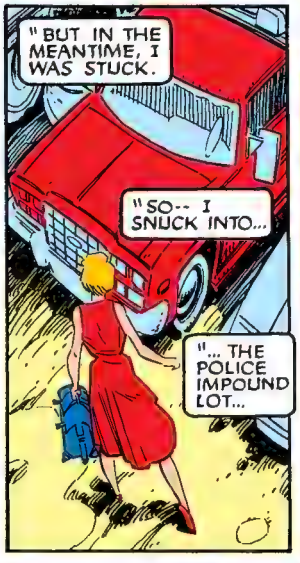
SOK
"IT TAKES A BRAVE MAN--
"--OR A CONSUMMATE FOOL--
"-- TO CHALLENGE WOLVERINE.
"ESPECIALLY ONCE HE 'POPS' HIS CLAWS.


"I THINK OUR GOON...
"... WAS TOO STUPID TO KNOW ANY BETTER.
"HE PAID THE PRICE.

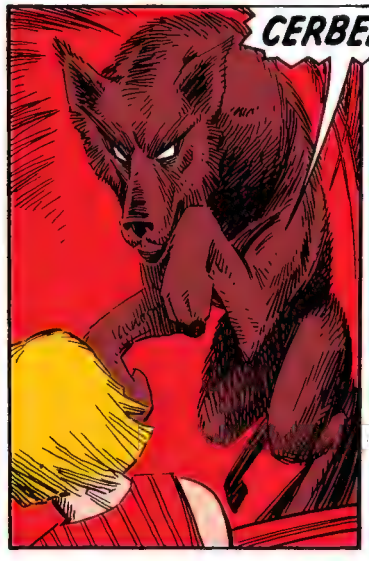

"WISH I'D BEEN HAVING BETTER LUCK.
PRISONER DON'T WANT ANY VISITORS, MA'AM.
COULD I SPEAK TO HIS ATTORNEY, THEN?
PUBLIC DEFENDER'S GONE FISHING.
YOU LEAVE YOUR NAME AN' NUMBER...

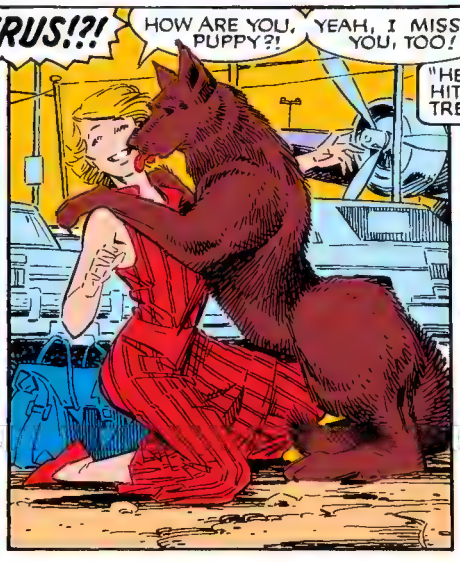

... WE'LL MAKE SURE HE GETS IN TOUCH.
YEAH. RIGHT. I'LL BET.

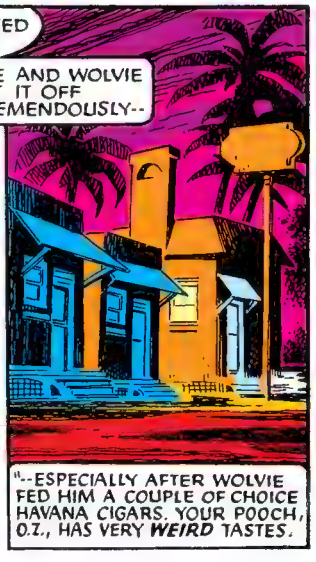

"I ONLY STUDIED UNDER-GRADUATE PRE-LAW, BUT I KNEW WHAT THESE COPS WERE PULLING WAS PATENTLY ILLEGAL.
"IF YOU'D EVER COME TO TRIAL, O.Z., THE CASE WOULD HAVE BEEN THROWN OUT FIRST THING.

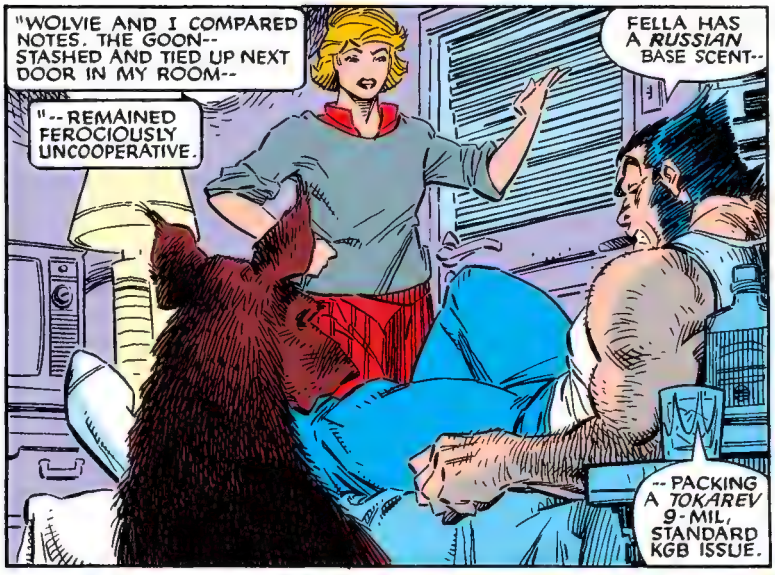

"BUT IN THE MEANTIME, I WAS STUCK.
"SO-- I SNUCK INTO...
"... THE POLICE IMPOUND LOT...

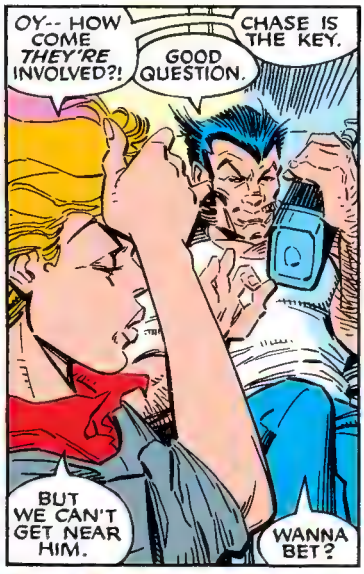
"...FOR A QUICK PEEK AT YOUR TRUCK.
"YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHO WAS WAITING.


CERBERUS!?!


HOW ARE YOU, PUPPY?!
YEAH, I MISSED YOU, TOO!

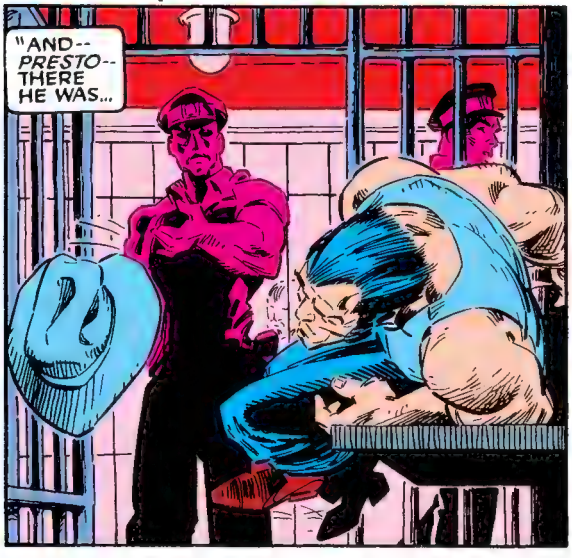

"HE AND WOLVIE HIT IT OFF TREMENDOUSLY--
"--ESPECIALLY AFTER WOLVIE FED HIM A COUPLE OF CHOICE HAVANA CIGARS. YOUR POOCH, O.Z., HAS VERY WEIRD TASTES.


"WOLVIE AND I COMPARED NOTES. THE GOON-- STASHED AND TIED UP NEXT DOOR IN MY ROOM--
"--REMAINED FEROCIOUSLY UNCOOPERATIVE.
FELLA HAS A *RUSSIAN* BASE SCENT--
--PACKING A *TOKAREV* 9-MIL, STANDARD KGB ISSUE.

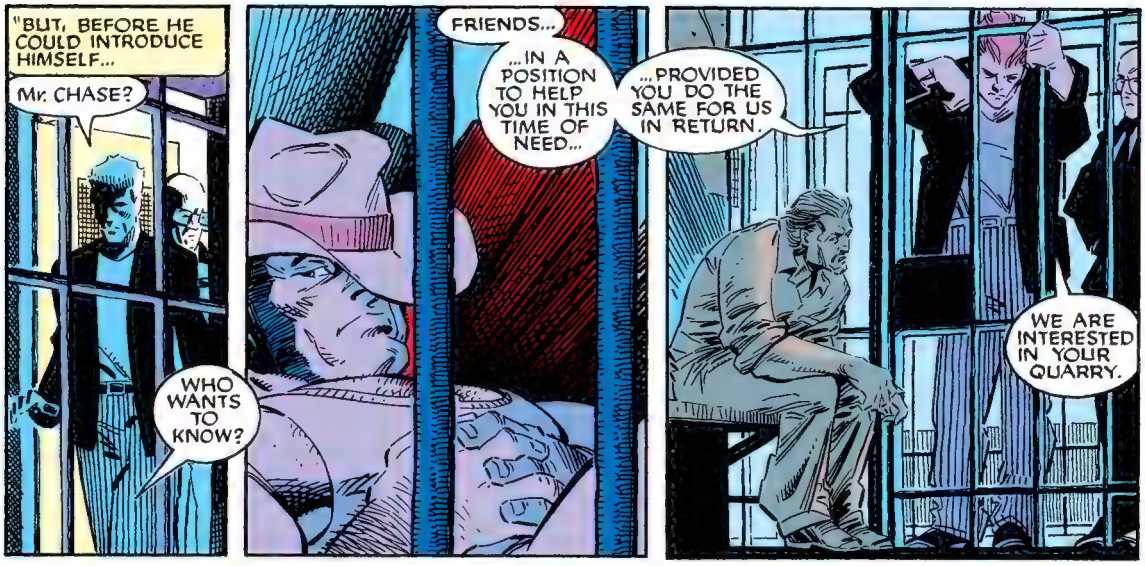

OY-- HOW COME *THEY'RE* INVOLVED?!
CHASE IS THE KEY.
GOOD QUESTION.
BUT WE CAN'T GET NEAR HIM.
WANNA BET?

"HE EMPTIED A BOTTLE OF BOOZE OVER HIMSELF FOR EFFECT...
"... THEN SANG HIS WAY DOWN MAIN STREET.
"SINATRA, HE'S NOT.

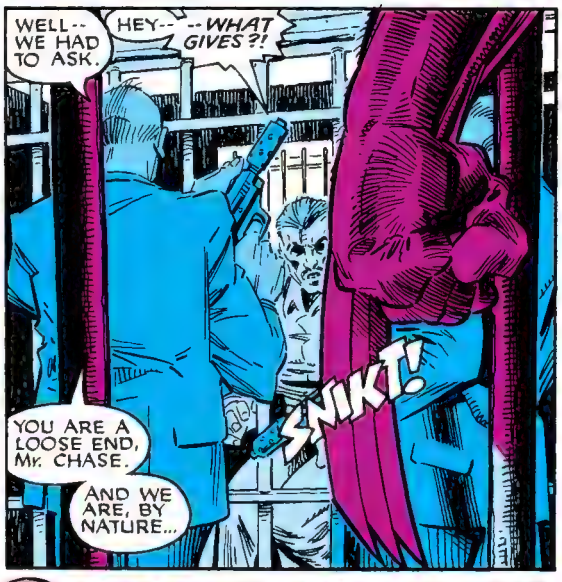
"THE *GENDARMERIE*, BLESS 'EM, DID THEIR DUTY.

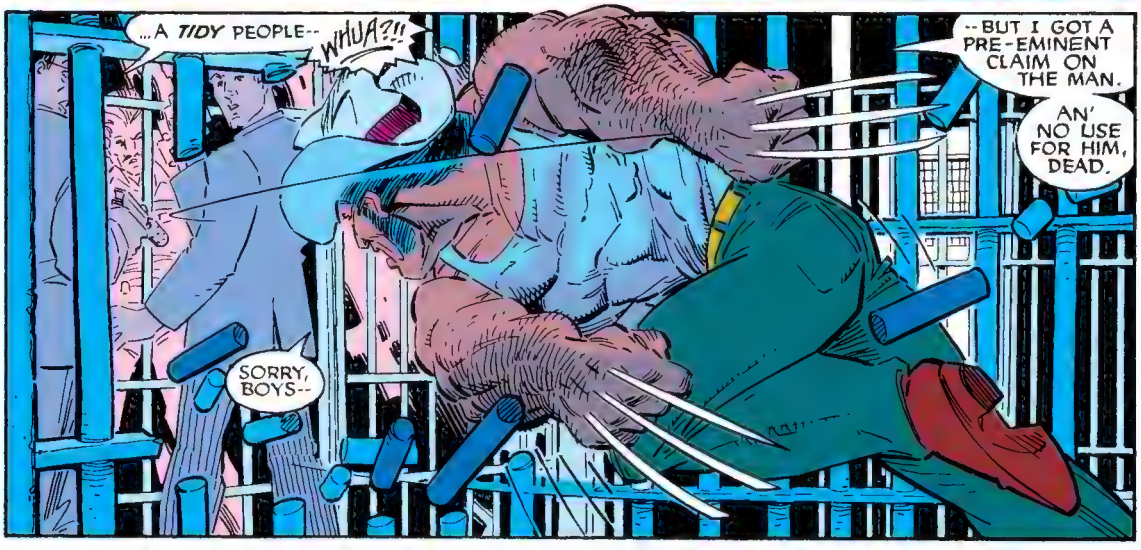

"AND-- *PRESTO*-- THERE HE WAS...

"...SHARING THE CELL BLOCK WITH YOU.

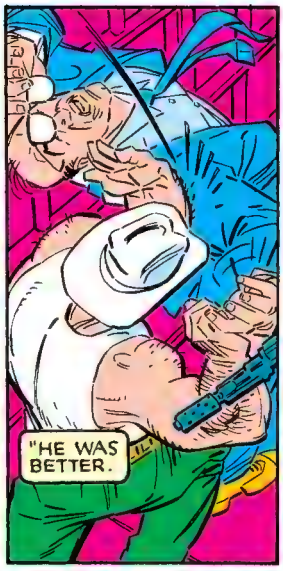

"BUT, BEFORE HE COULD INTRODUCE HIMSELF...
Mr. CHASE?
WHO WANTS TO KNOW?
FRIENDS...
...IN A POSITION TO HELP YOU IN THIS TIME OF NEED...
...PROVIDED YOU DO THE SAME FOR US IN RETURN.
WE ARE INTERESTED IN YOUR QUARRY.

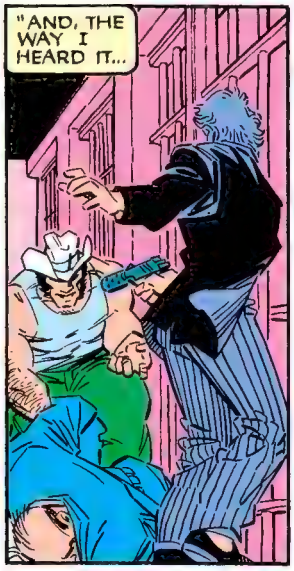
LOOK, EVERYTHING I KNOW IS ON THE POLICE REPORT.
ONE OF OUR COLLEAGUES IS MISSING...
...CAN YOU PERHAPS ACCOUNT FOR THAT?
HEY, PAL, I'VE BEEN HERE THE PAST WEEK.


WELL-- WE HAD TO ASK.
HEY-- --WHAT GIVES?!
YOU ARE A LOOSE END, Mr. CHASE.
AND WE ARE, BY NATURE...
SNIK!

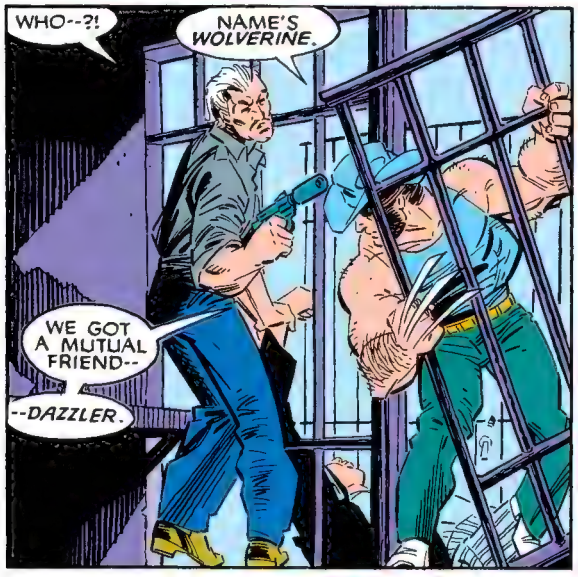

...A TIDY PEOPLE--
WHUA?!!
--BUT I GOT A PRE-EMINENT CLAIM ON THE MAN.
AN' NO USE FOR HIM, DEAD.
SORRY, BOYS--

"THEY WERE GOOD.


"HE WAS BETTER.

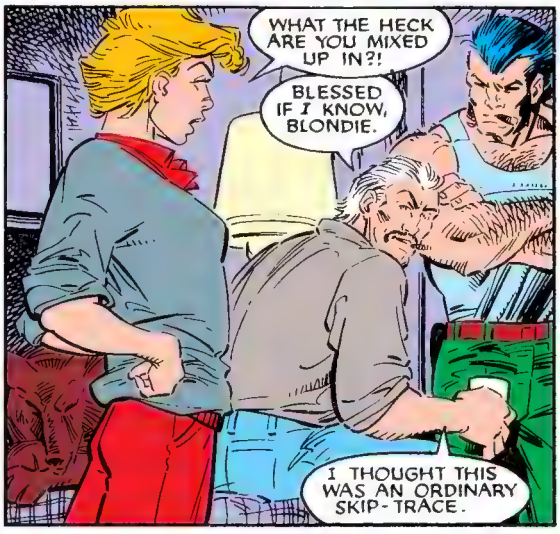

"AND, THE WAY I HEARD IT...

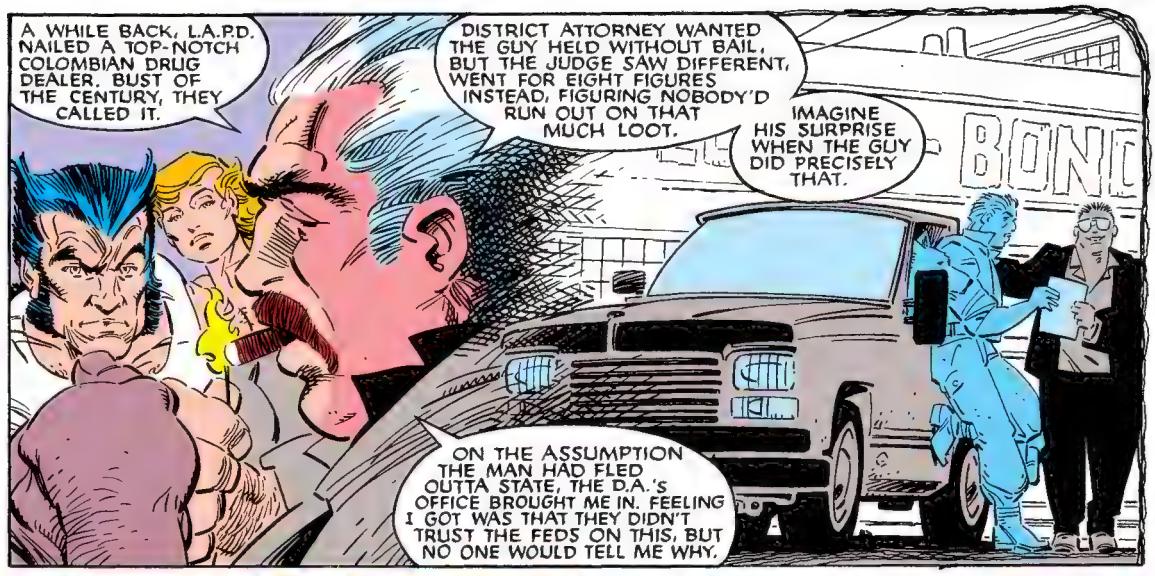
"...YOU PLAYED YOUR PART AS WELL.


WHO--?!
NAME'S WOLVERINE.
WE GOT A MUTUAL FRIEND--
--DAZZLER.

AIN'T MY STYLE...
... TO BUST OUTTA JAIL.
YOU RATHER STAY...
... AND REMAIN A SITTING DUCK?

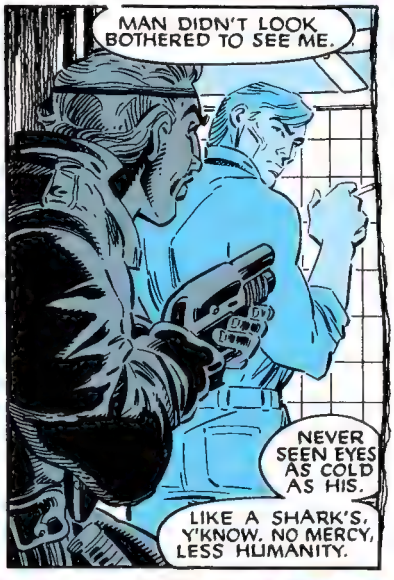
ASSUMING YOU'RE INNOCENT, O.Z. ...
"ASSUMING?!"
...SOMEONE'S GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO FRAME YOU.
AND SOMEONE ELSE, IT SEEMS...
...IS GOING TO AS MUCH TROUBLE...
...TO HAVE YOU KILLED!


WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU MIXED UP IN?!
BLESSED IF I KNOW, BLONDIE.
I THOUGHT THIS WAS AN ORDINARY SKIP-TRACE.

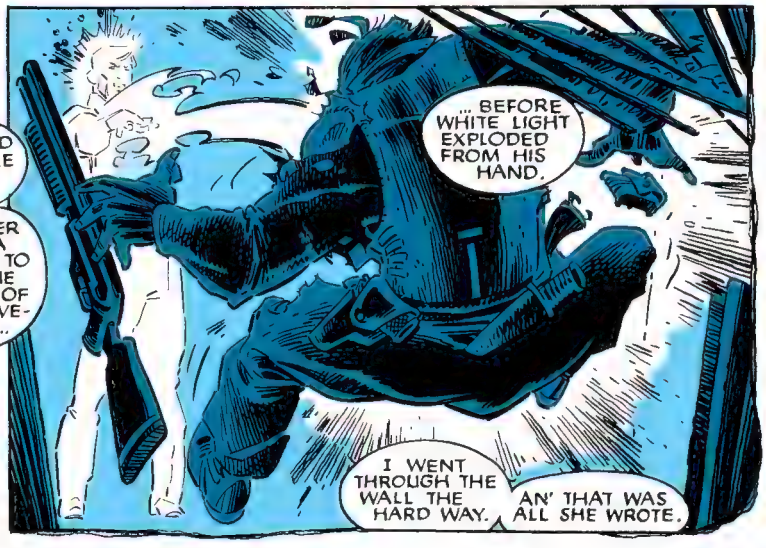

A WHILE BACK, L.A.P.D. NAILED A TOP-NOTCH COLOMBIAN DRUG DEALER. BUST OF THE CENTURY, THEY CALLED IT.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY WANTED THE GUY HELD WITHOUT BAIL, BUT THE JUDGE SAW DIFFERENT, WENT FOR EIGHT FIGURES INSTEAD, FIGURING NOBODY'D RUN OUT ON THAT MUCH LOOT.
IMAGINE HIS SURPRISE WHEN THE GUY DID PRECISELY THAT.
BOND
ON THE ASSUMPTION THE MAN HAD FLED OUTTA STATE, THE D.A.'S OFFICE BROUGHT ME IN. FEELING I GOT WAS THAT THEY DIDN'T TRUST THE FEDS ON THIS, BUT NO ONE WOULD TELL ME WHY.

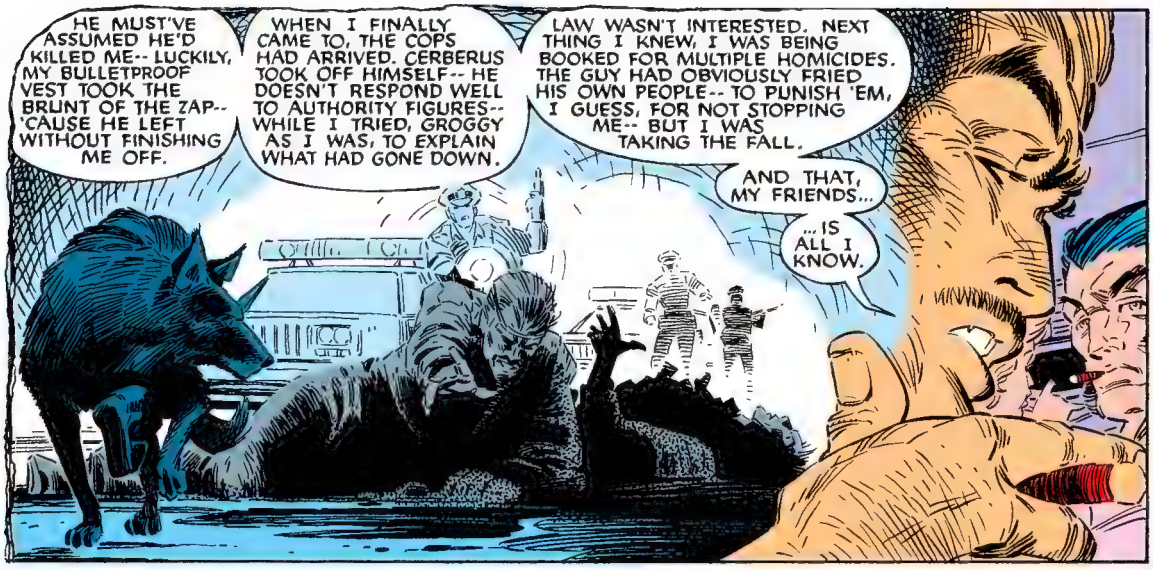
TOOK A WHILE, BUT THE TRAIL LED HERE, TO THE 'GLADES.
HE HAD A SMALL ARMY PROTECTIN' HIM.

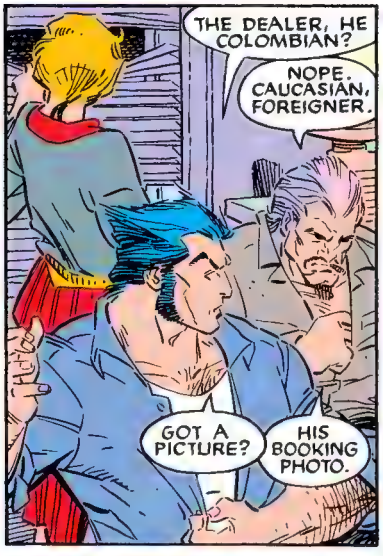
DOG AN' ME...
...WE CUT 'EM DOWN TO SIZE.

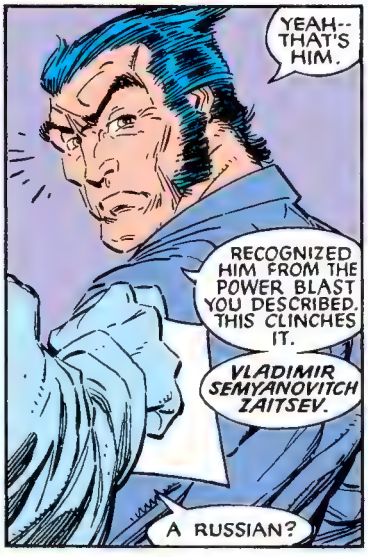

MAN DIDN'T LOOK BOTHERED TO SEE ME.
NEVER SEEN EYES AS COLD AS HIS.
LIKE A SHARK'S, Y'KNOW. NO MERCY, LESS HUMANITY.

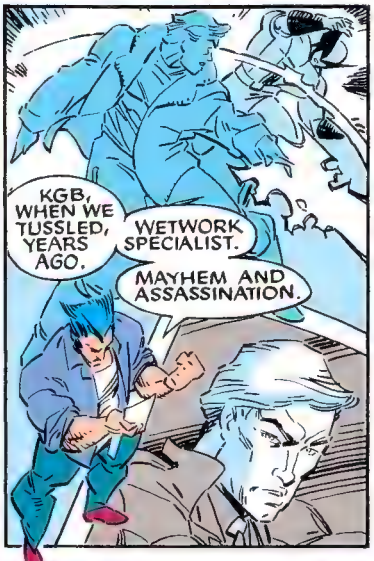
HE SMILED...
... AN' BEGAN TO GLOW--
--REMINDED ME A LITTLE OF YOU, DAZZ--
-- NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO PULL THE TRIGGER OF MY TWELVE-GAUGE...


... BEFORE WHITE LIGHT EXPLODED FROM HIS HAND.
I WENT THROUGH THE WALL THE HARD WAY.
AN' THAT WAS ALL SHE WROTE.


HE MUST'VE ASSUMED HE'D KILLED ME-- LUCKILY, MY BULLETPROOF VEST TOOK THE BRUNT OF THE ZAP-- 'CAUSE HE LEFT WITHOUT FINISHING ME OFF.
WHEN I FINALLY CAME TO, THE COPS HAD ARRIVED. CERBERUS TOOK OFF HIMSELF-- HE DOESN'T RESPOND WELL TO AUTHORITY FIGURES-- WHILE I TRIED, GROGGY AS I WAS, TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAD GONE DOWN.
LAW WASN'T INTERESTED. NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS BEING BOOKED FOR MULTIPLE HOMICIDES. THE GUY HAD OBVIOUSLY FRIED HIS OWN PEOPLE-- TO PUNISH 'EM, I GUESS, FOR NOT STOPPING ME-- BUT I WAS TAKING THE FALL.
AND THAT, MY FRIENDS...
...IS ALL I KNOW.


THE DEALER, HE COLOMBIAN?
NOPE. CAUCASIAN, FOREIGNER.
GOT A PICTURE?
HIS BOOKING PHOTO.

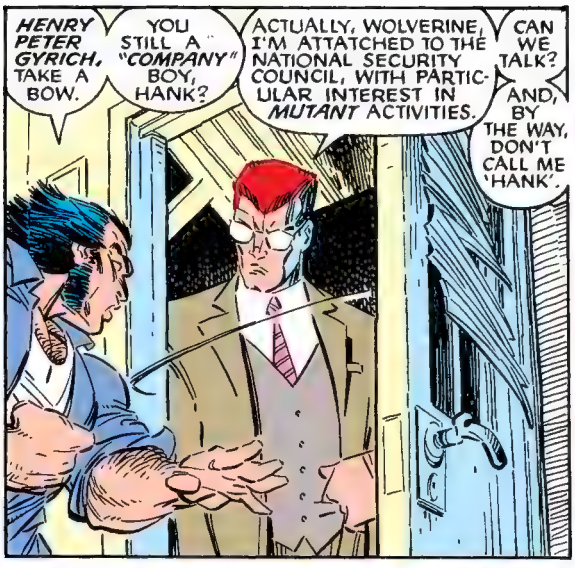

YEAH-- THAT'S HIM.
RECOGNIZED HIM FROM THE POWER BLAST YOU DESCRIBED. THIS CLINCHES IT.
VLADIMIR SEMYANOVITCH ZAITSEV.
A RUSSIAN?


KGB, WHEN WE TUSSLED, YEARS AGO.
WETWORK SPECIALIST.
MAYHEM AND ASSASSINATION.

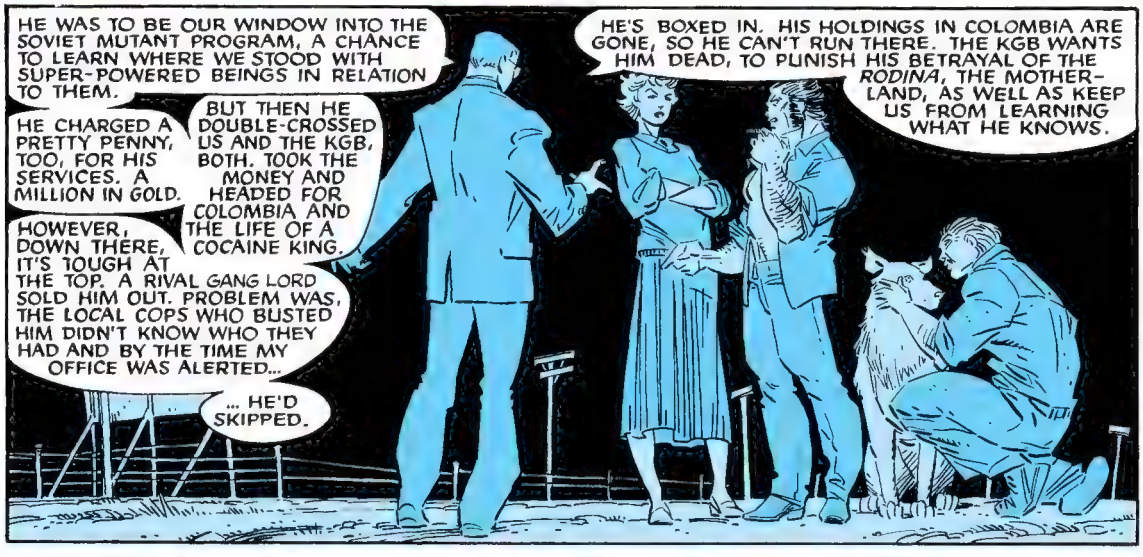
BUT-- IF ZAITSEV'S A SOVIET SPY...
...WHY ARE OTHER SOVIET SPIES CHASING HIM?
RESCUE TEAM?
INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE--
--THIS IS A LITTLE OUTTA MY LEAGUE.

OR MAYBE VLAD'S BECOME AN EMBARRASSMENT?
NOK NOK

RUSSIANS?!
THEY GENERALLY DON'T KNOCK.
SCENT TELLS ME, THOUGH...
...IT'S SOMEONE ALMOST AS BAD.


HENRY PETER GYRICH, TAKE A BOW.
YOU STILL A "COMPANY" BOY, HANK?
ACTUALLY, WOLVERINE, I'M ATTATCHED TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, WITH PARTICULAR INTEREST IN MUTANT ACTIVITIES.
CAN WE TALK?
AND, BY THE WAY, DON'T CALL ME 'HANK'.

WHEN I WORKED FOR THE CANADIAN SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, HANK HERE WAS MY CIA LIAISON.
ZAITSEV, OF COURSE.
FIVE YEARS AGO, WE THOUGHT WE'D TURNED HIM. A PRIZE DEFECTION.
SO, OL' BUDDY, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS NECK O' THE WOODS?


HE WAS TO BE OUR WINDOW INTO THE SOVIET MUTANT PROGRAM, A CHANCE TO LEARN WHERE WE STOOD WITH SUPER-POWERED BEINGS IN RELATION TO THEM.
HE'S BOXED IN. HIS HOLDINGS IN COLOMBIA ARE GONE, SO HE CAN'T RUN THERE. THE KGB WANTS HIM DEAD, TO PUNISH HIS BETRAYAL OF THE RODINA, THE MOTHERLAND, AS WELL AS KEEP US FROM LEARNING WHAT HE KNOWS.
HE CHARGED A PRETTY PENNY, TOO, FOR HIS SERVICES. A MILLION IN GOLD.
BUT THEN HE DOUBLE-CROSSED US AND THE KGB, BOTH. TOOK THE MONEY AND HEADED FOR COLOMBIA AND THE LIFE OF A COCAINE KING.
HOWEVER, DOWN THERE, IT'S TOUGH AT THE TOP. A RIVAL GANG LORD SOLD HIM OUT. PROBLEM WAS, THE LOCAL COPS WHO BUSTED HIM DIDN'T KNOW WHO THEY HAD AND BY THE TIME MY OFFICE WAS ALERTED...
... HE'D SKIPPED.

THEY'VE SENT OVER A TEAM OF TOP HITTERS TO DO THE JOB.
WE HAVE TO GET TO HIM FIRST.
AND YOU WANT ME TO DO IT?
YOU HAVE THE SKILLS, AND IT CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HURT THE X-MEN'S REPUTATION...

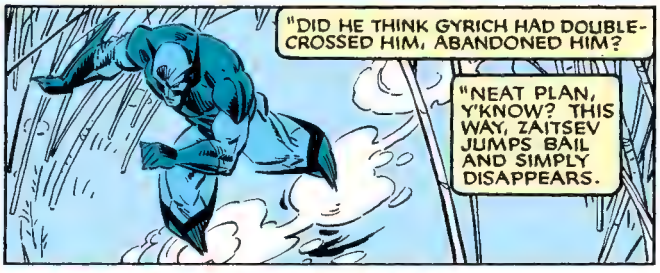
... TO CO-OPERATE...
...WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THIS MATTER.
ZAITSEV'S CRIMES DON'T MATTER?
THAT'S NOT YOUR CONCERN.
JUST BRING HIM IN, WOLVERINE-- ALIVE.
LEAVE THE REST TO US.

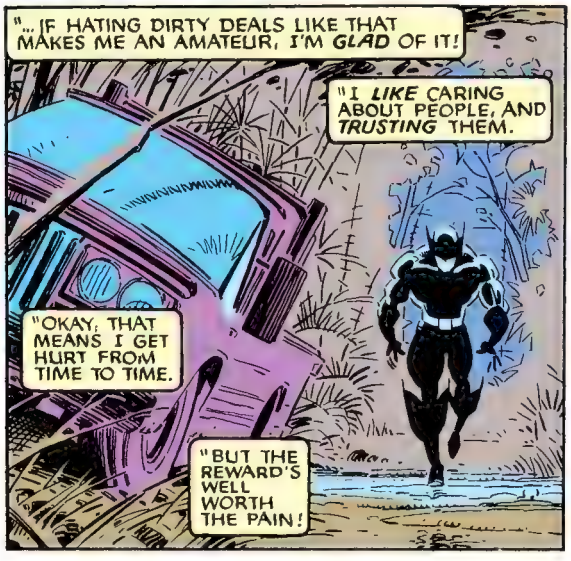
"NICE OF GYRICH TO TELL YOU THE CHARGES AGAINST YOU HAD BEEN DROPPED...WHEN HE WAS PROBABLY THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR ARREST IN THE FIRST PLACE. SANCTIMONIOUSLY SELF-RIGHTEOUS CREEP.

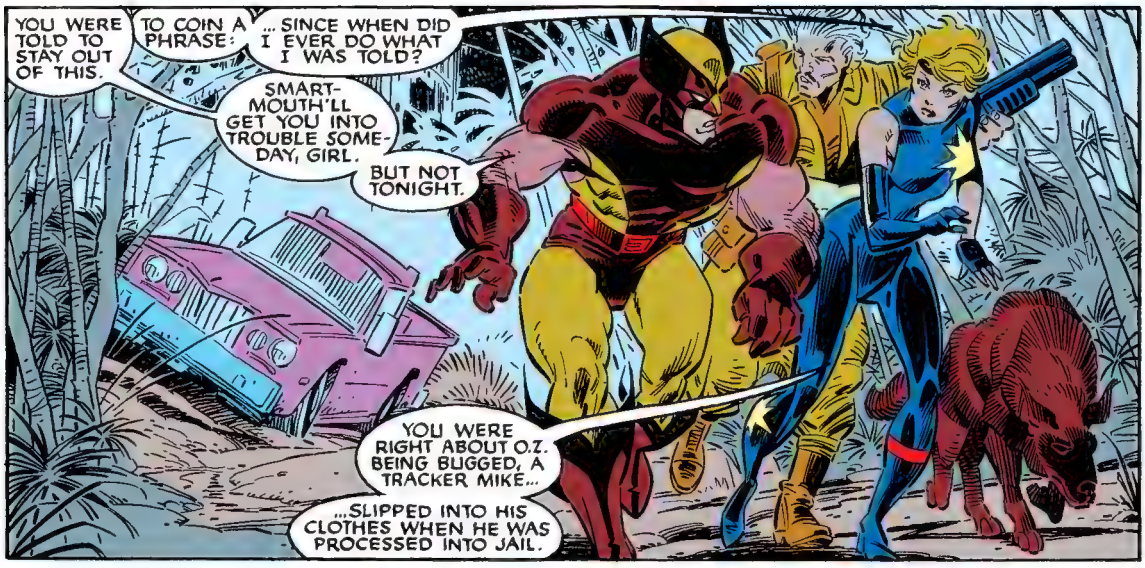
"I UNDERSTOOD WOLVIE'S FEELINGS. FROM WHAT I HEARD, ZAITSEV HAD LEFT A TRAIL OF BODIES BACK TO RUSSIA AND BEYOND.

"YET, BECAUSE IT WAS SUPPOSEDLY IN AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTEREST, WE WERE GOING TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO ALL THAT. GIVE HIM A NEW IDENTITY, A NEW LIFE, GUARANTEED SAFETY TO THE END OF HIS DAYS.

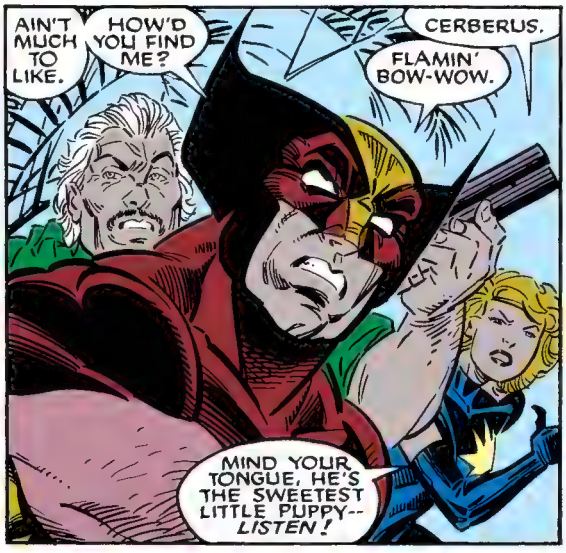
"CRIME, FOR HIM, WAS GOING TO PAY, IN SPADES.

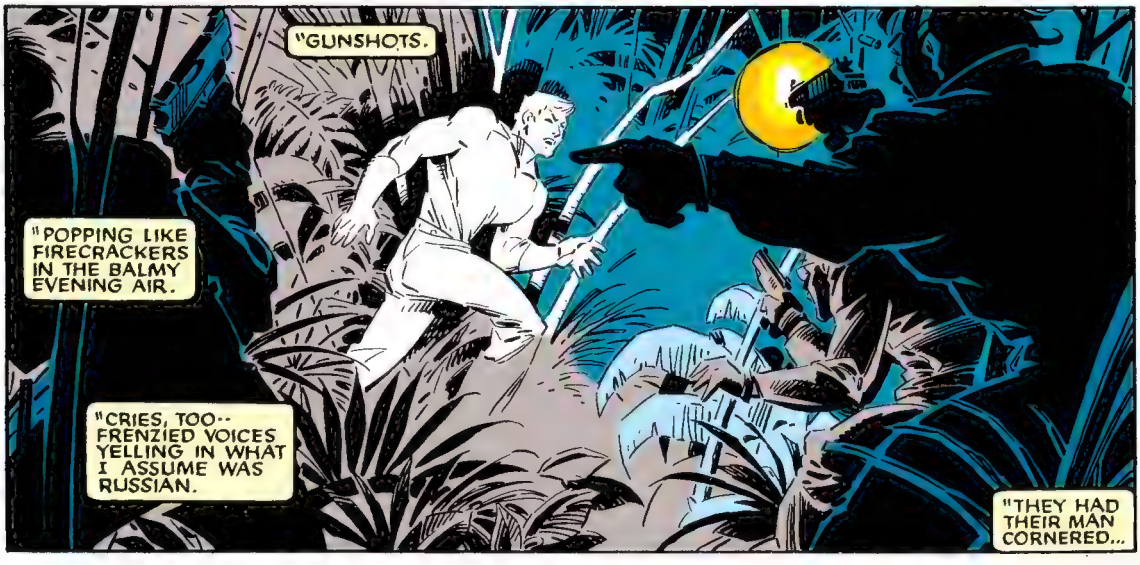


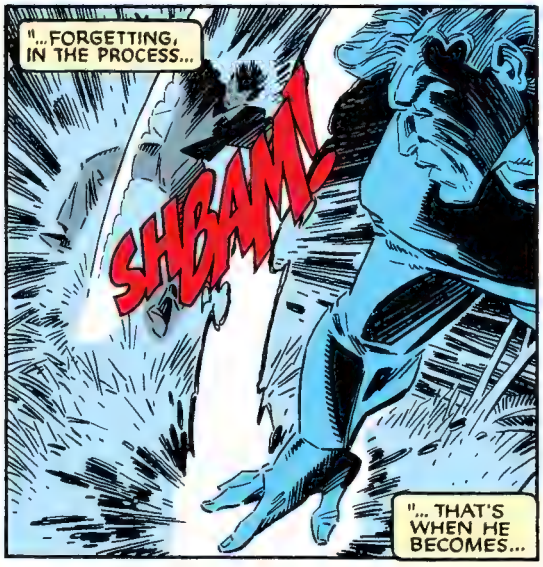


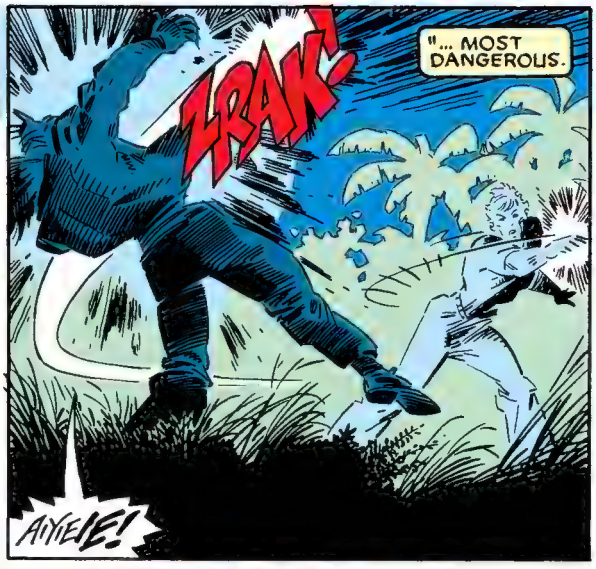

YOU WERE TOLD TO STAY OUT OF THIS.
TO COIN A PHRASE:
... SINCE WHEN DID I EVER DO WHAT I WAS TOLD?
SMART-MOUTH'LL GET YOU INTO TROUBLE SOME-DAY, GIRL.
BUT NOT TONIGHT.
YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT O.Z. BEING BUGGED, A TRACKER MIKE...
...SLIPPED INTO HIS CLOTHES WHEN HE WAS PROCESSED INTO JAIL.

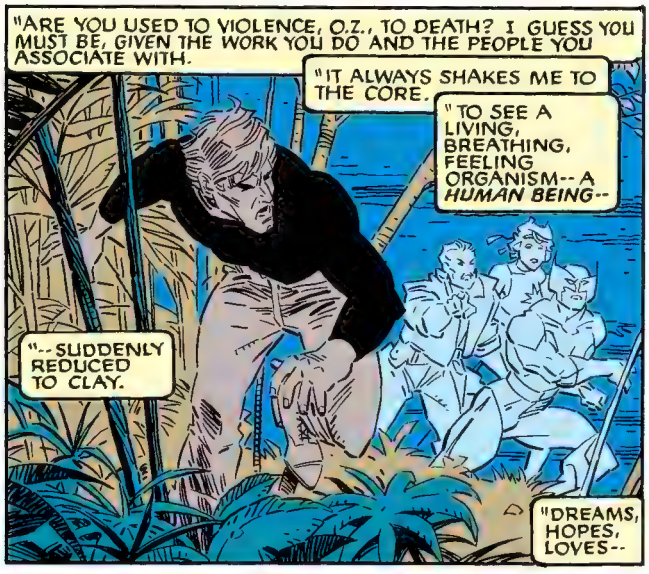
THANKS FOR SLIPPING US THE NOTE.
THOUGHT THAT WAS IT.
EXPLAINS HOW HANK FOUND OUR MOTEL.
YOU REALLY DON'T LIKE HIM.


AIN'T MUCH TO LIKE.
HOW'D YOU FIND ME?
CERBERUS.
FLAMIN' BOW-WOW.
MIND YOUR TONGUE, HE'S THE SWEETEST LITTLE PUPPY-- LISTEN!

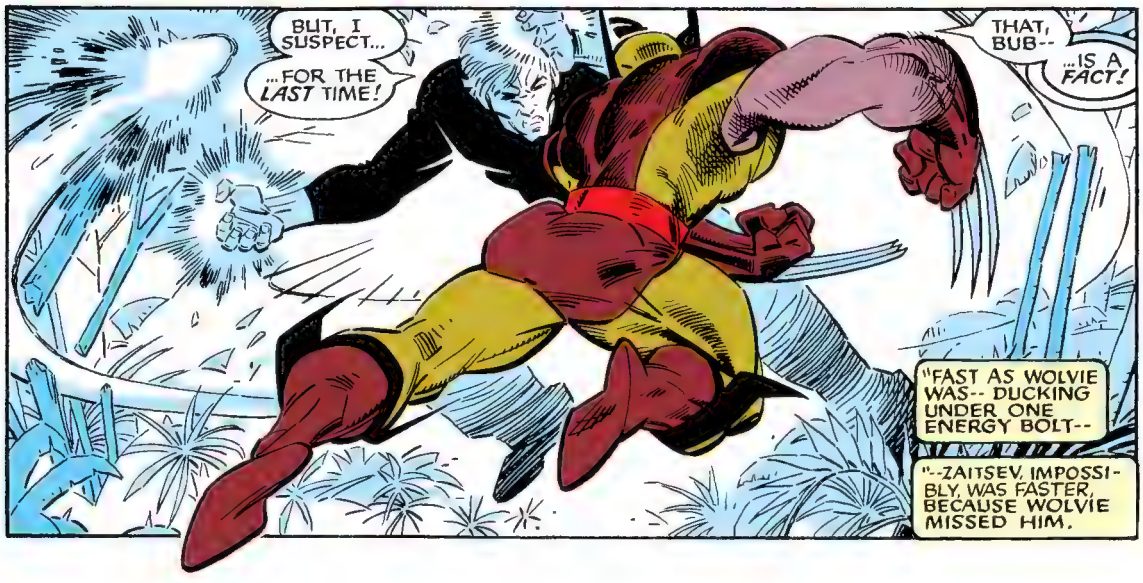

"GUNSHOTS.
"POPPING LIKE FIRECRACKERS IN THE BALMY EVENING AIR.
"CRIES, TOO-- FRENZIED VOICES YELLING IN WHAT I ASSUME WAS RUSSIAN.
"THEY HAD THEIR MAN CORNERED...


"...FORGETTING, IN THE PROCESS...
SHBAM!
"... THAT'S WHEN HE BECOMES...

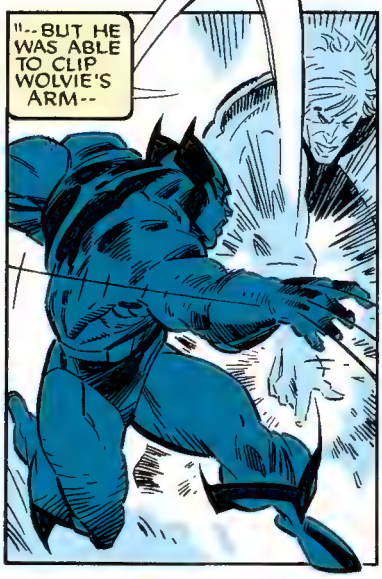

ZRAK!
"... MOST DANGEROUS.
AIYEIE!

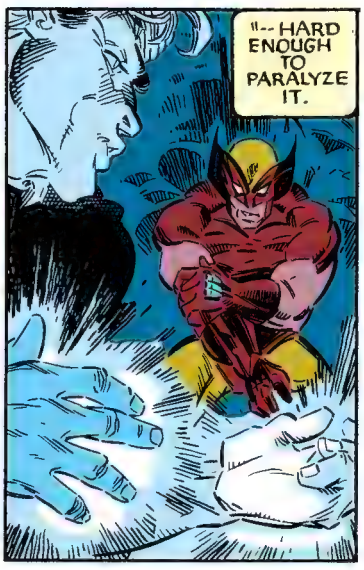

"ARE YOU USED TO VIOLENCE, O.Z., TO DEATH? I GUESS YOU MUST BE, GIVEN THE WORK YOU DO AND THE PEOPLE YOU ASSOCIATE WITH.
"IT ALWAYS SHAKES ME TO THE CORE.
"TO SEE A LIVING, BREATHING, FEELING ORGANISM-- A HUMAN BEING--
"--SUDDENLY REDUCED TO CLAY.
"DREAMS, HOPES, LOVES--

"--MADE INSTANT DUST, AS IF THEY'D NEVER BEEN.
SO, TOVARISCH--
--WE MEET AGAIN.


BUT, I SUSPECT...
...FOR THE LAST TIME!
THAT, BUB--
...IS A FACT!
"FAST AS WOLVIE WAS-- DUCKING UNDER ONE ENERGY BOLT--
"--ZAITSEV, IMPOSSIBLY, WAS FASTER, BECAUSE WOLVIE MISSED HIM.

"ZAITSEV DIDN'T HAVE SUFFICIENT 'JUICE' FOR ANOTHER FULL-POWER BLAST--
"--oh BROTHER, DID I KNOW *THAT* FEELING--


"--BUT HE WAS ABLE TO CLIP WOLVIE'S ARM--

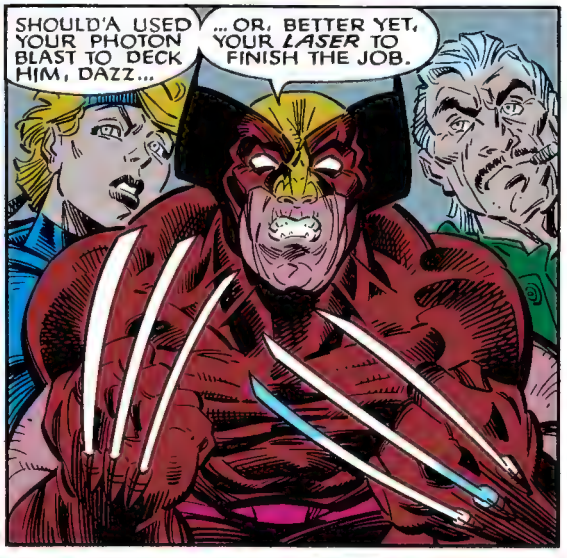

"--HARD ENOUGH TO PARALYZE IT.

YO, BRIGHT-EYES--REMEMBER ME?!
THE BOUNTY MAN!
I'D BE SAFE NOW, IF NOT FOR YOUR INTERFERENCE.
I SHOULD HAVE MADE CERTAIN OF YOU WHEN LAST WE MET.

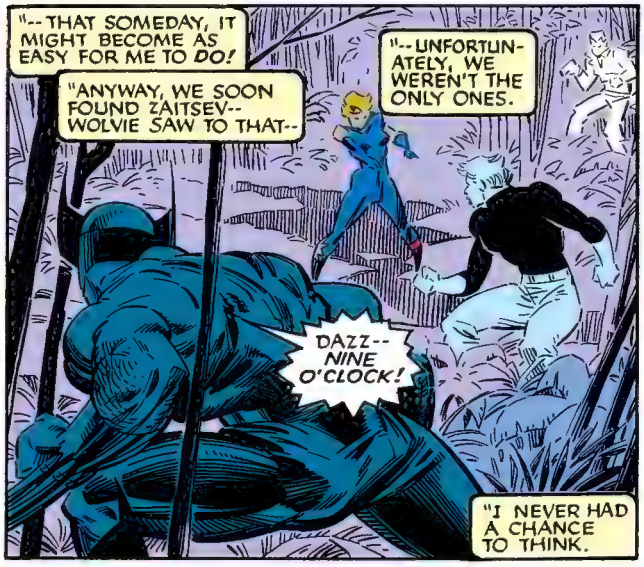
I SHALL NOT BE *SO* CARELESS A SECOND TIME.

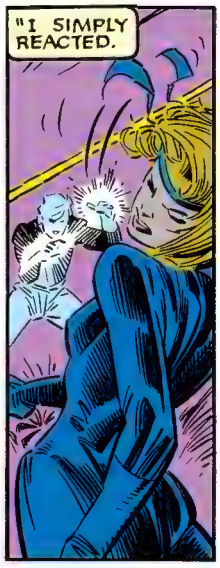
SORRY, BUSTER...
... BUT I LIKE THE MAN...
... THE WAY HE IS!
"MY *DAZZLE-STROBE* DISORIENTED HIM...

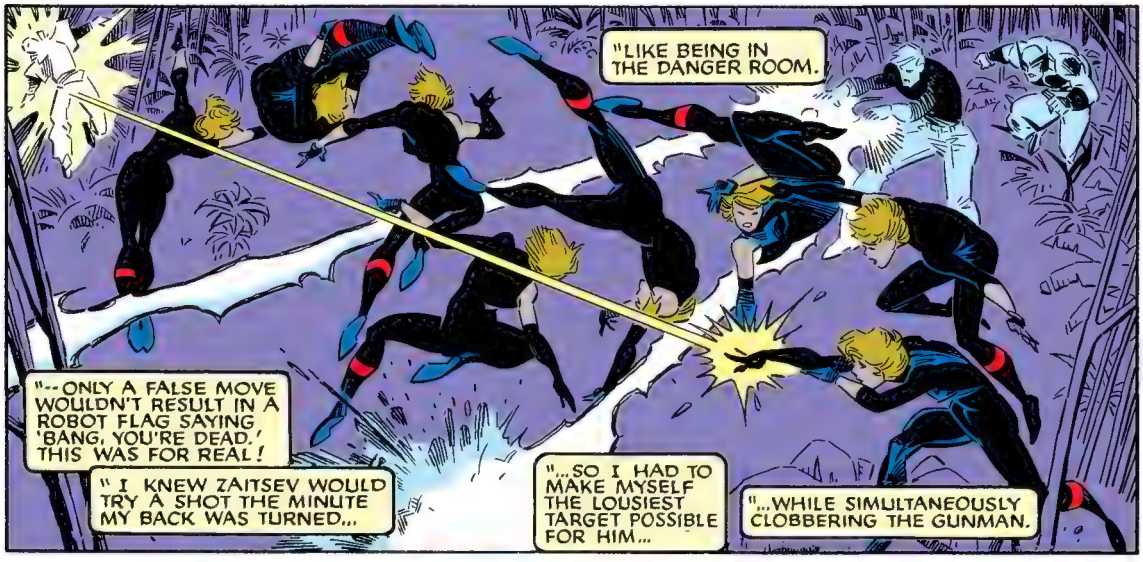
"... AND HE RAN LIKE A RABBIT.
"AS USUAL, WOLVIE FIGURED I'D SCREWED UP.

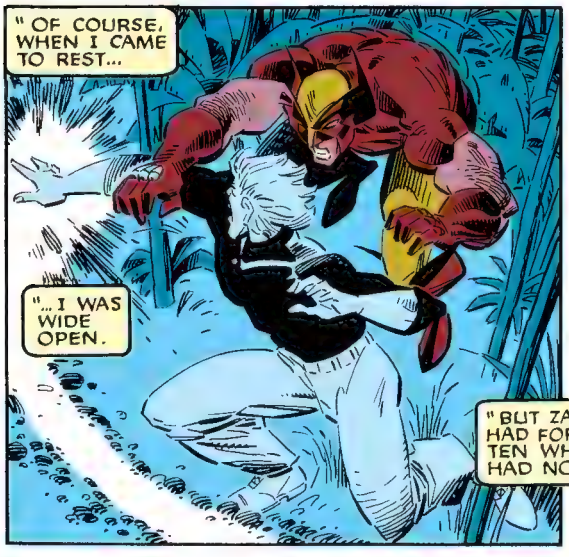

SHOULD'A USED YOUR PHOTON BLAST TO DECK HIM, DAZZ...
... OR, BETTER YET, YOUR *LASER* TO FINISH THE JOB.

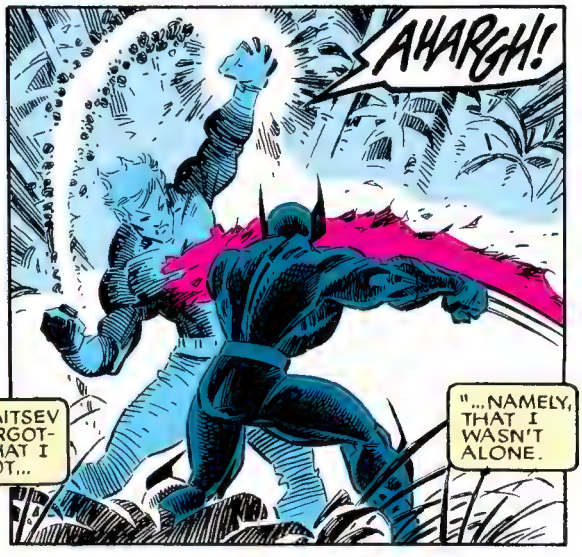
"EASY FOR HIM TO SAY.
"I'M SO AFRAID, O.Z. --


"-- THAT SOMEDAY, IT MIGHT BECOME AS EASY FOR ME TO DO!
"ANYWAY, WE SOON FOUND ZAITSEV-- WOLVIE SAW TO THAT--
"-- UNFORTUNATELY, WE WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES.
DAZZ-- NINE O'CLOCK!
"I NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO THINK.

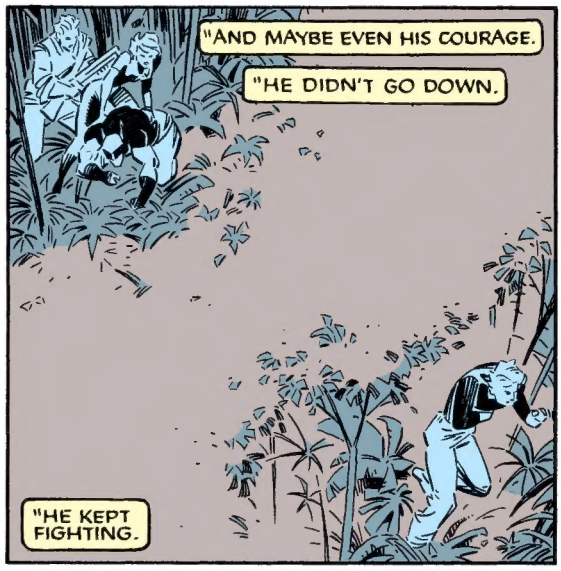

"I SIMPLY REACTED.

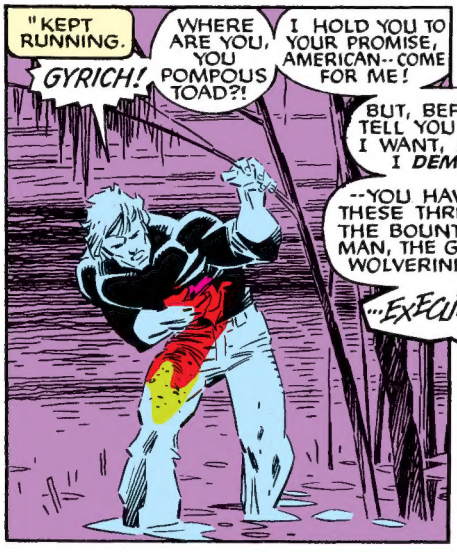

"LIKE BEING IN THE DANGER ROOM.
"-- ONLY A FALSE MOVE WOULDN'T RESULT IN A ROBOT FLAG SAYING 'BANG, YOU'RE DEAD.' THIS WAS FOR REAL!
" I KNEW ZAITSEV WOULD TRY A SHOT THE MINUTE MY BACK WAS TURNED...
"...SO I HAD TO MAKE MYSELF THE LOUSIEST TARGET POSSIBLE FOR HIM...
"...WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CLOBBERING THE GUNMAN.


" OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME TO REST...
"... I WAS WIDE OPEN.
" BUT ZAITSEV HAD FORGOTTEN WHAT I HAD NOT...


AHARGH!
"...NAMELY, THAT I WASN'T ALONE.

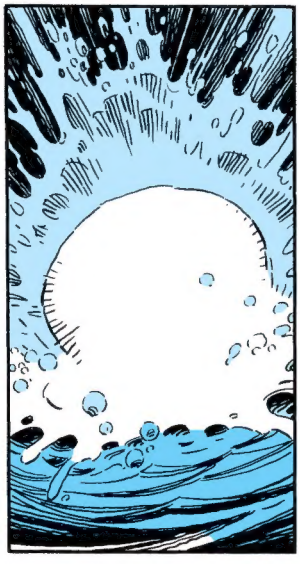
"IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, THOUGH...
"... I HAD TO ADMIRE THE MAN'S STAMINA.

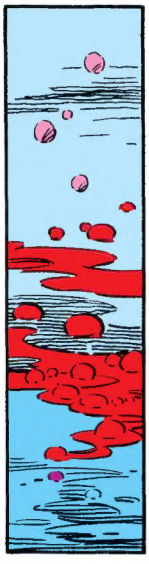

"AND MAYBE EVEN HIS COURAGE.
"HE DIDN'T GO DOWN.
"HE KEPT FIGHTING.


"KEPT RUNNING.
GYRICH!
WHERE ARE YOU, YOU POMPOUS TOAD?!
I HOLD YOU TO YOUR PROMISE, AMERICAN--COME FOR ME!

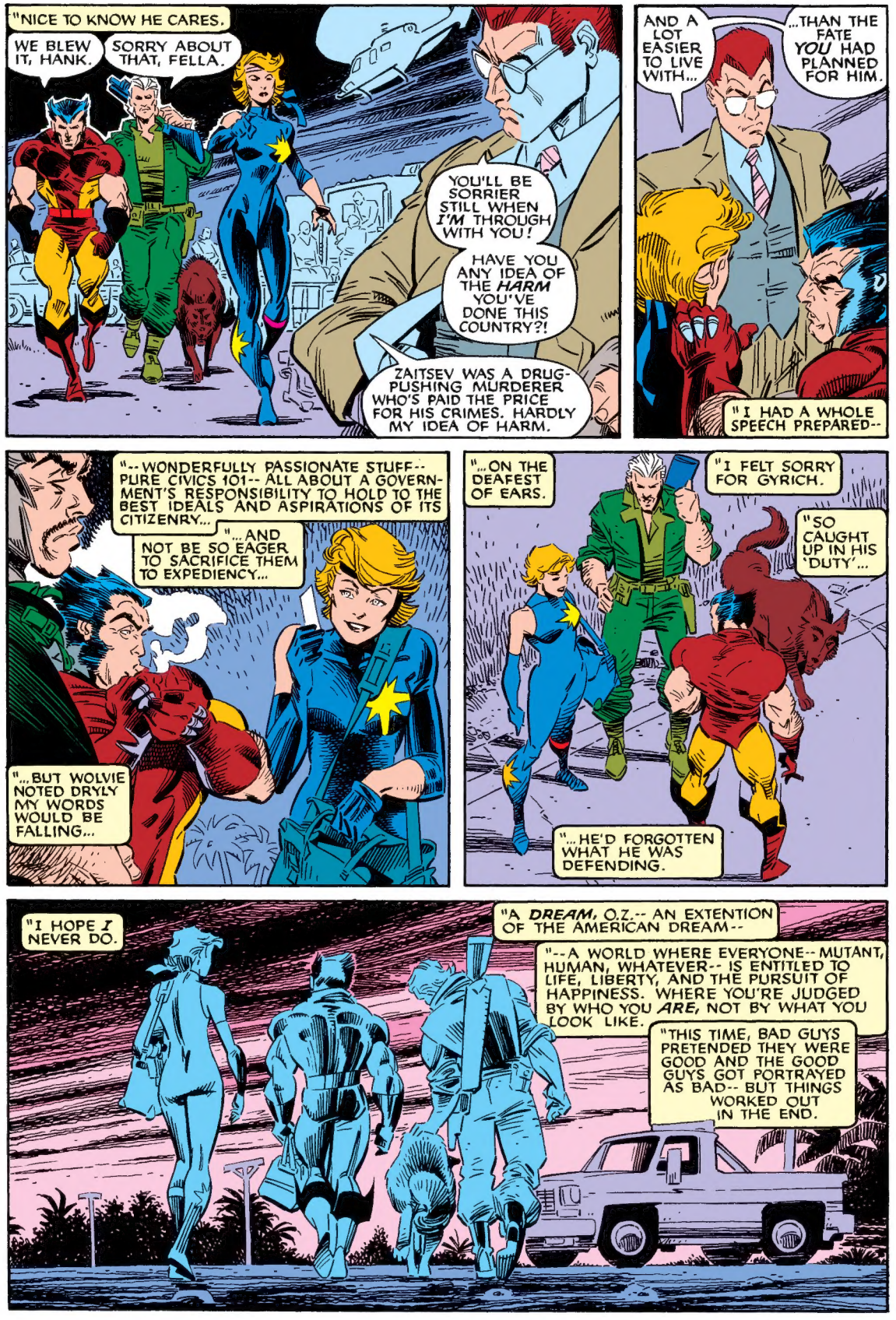
BUT, BEFORE I TELL YOU A WORD, I WANT, I INSIST, I DEMAND--
--YOU HAVE THESE THREE: THE BOUNTY MAN, THE GIRL, WOLVERINE...
...EXECUTED!
THAT IS MY PRICE, GYRICH! THEIR LIVES FOR...
...MINE.

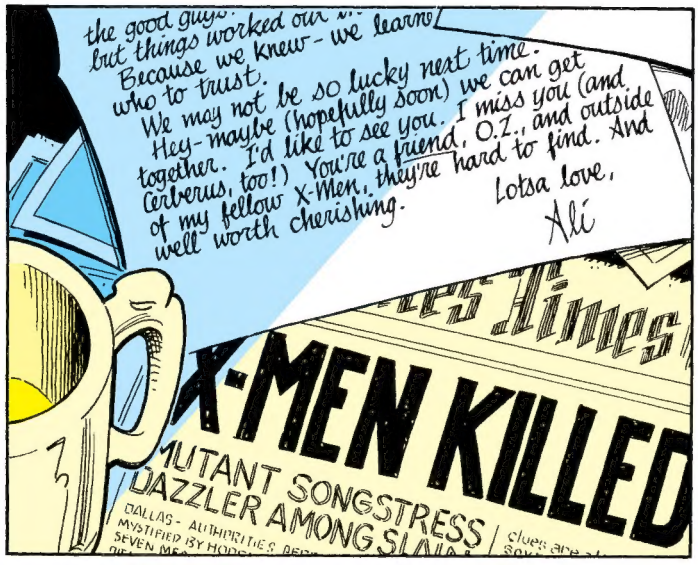
"I GUESS CERBERUS...





"... CONSIDERED THAT A PRETTY FAIR DEAL.


"NICE TO KNOW HE CARES.
WE BLEW IT, HANK.
SORRY ABOUT THAT, FELLA.
YOU'LL BE SORRIER STILL WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH YOU!
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA OF THE HARM YOU'VE DONE THIS COUNTRY?!
ZAITSEV WAS A DRUG-PUSHING MURDERER WHO'S PAID THE PRICE FOR HIS CRIMES. HARDLY MY IDEA OF HARM.
AND A LOT EASIER TO LIVE WITH...
...THAN THE FATE YOU HAD PLANNED FOR HIM.
"I HAD A WHOLE SPEECH PREPARED--
"--WONDERFULLY PASSIONATE STUFF--PURE CIVICS 101-- ALL ABOUT A GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HOLD TO THE BEST IDEALS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ITS CITIZENRY...
"...AND NOT BE SO EAGER TO SACRIFICE THEM TO EXPEDIENCY...
"...BUT WOLVIE NOTED DRYLY MY WORDS WOULD BE FALLING...
"...ON THE DEAFEST OF EARS.
"I FELT SORRY FOR GYRICH.
"SO CAUGHT UP IN HIS 'DUTY'...
"...HE'D FORGOTTEN WHAT HE WAS DEFENDING.
"I HOPE I NEVER DO.
"A DREAM, O.Z.-- AN EXTENTION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM--
"--A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE--MUTANT, HUMAN, WHATEVER-- IS ENTITLED TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. WHERE YOU'RE JUDGED BY WHO YOU ARE, NOT BY WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE.
"THIS TIME, BAD GUYS PRETENDED THEY WERE GOOD AND THE GOOD GUYS GOT PORTRAYED AS BAD-- BUT THINGS WORKED OUT IN THE END.

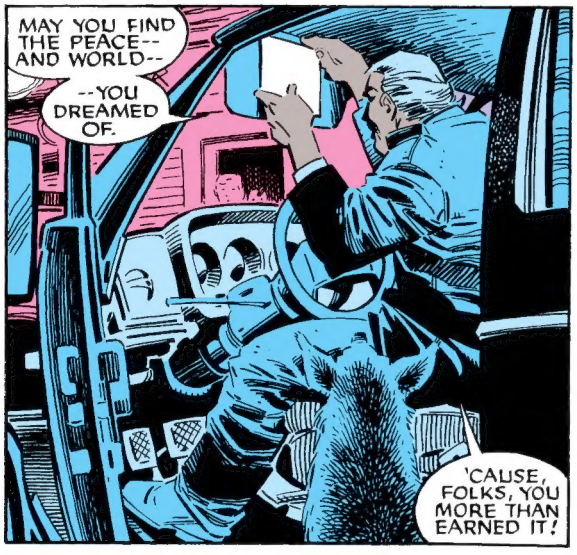

the good guys.
but things worked out
Because we knew - we learn
who to trust.
We may not be so lucky next time.
Hey-maybe (hopefully soon) we can get
together. I'd like to see you. I miss you (and
Cerberus, too!) You're a friend, O.Z., and outside
of my fellow X-Men, they're hard to find. And
well worth cherishing.
Lotsa love,
Ali
X-MEN KILLED
MUTANT SONGSTRESS
DAZZLER AMONG SLAIN

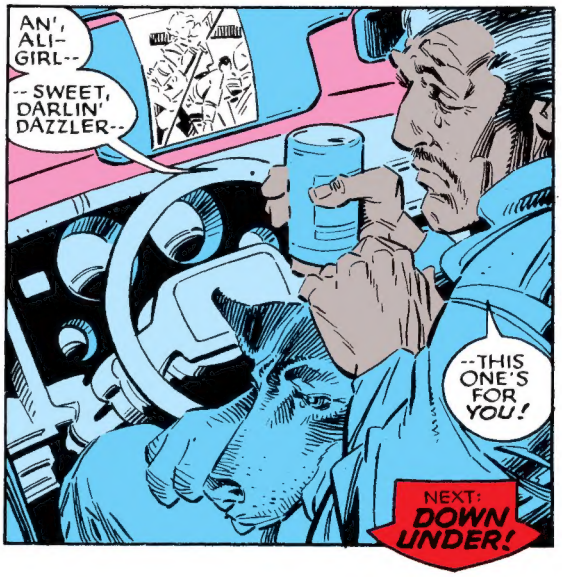
Y'ASK ME, IT'S GOOD RIDDANCE.
THOSE MUTIES GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED.
WORLD'S BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEIR KIND.

SOME OF THOSE "MUTIES", PAL, WERE FRIENDS OF MINE.
IT'S DISRESPECTFUL TO SPEAK SO OF THE DEAD.
HOW'S ABOUT, INSTEAD, YOU ALL RAISE YOUR GLASSES IN A TOAST?

AN' IF YOU DON'T--
--WELL, I'M A TOLERANT MAN BY NATURE.
GRRRR
BUT MY DOG, HE'S GOT A REAL SHORT FUSE.

TO DAZZLER, AND THE X-MEN!
TO DAZZLER, AND THE X-MEN!


MAY YOU FIND THE PEACE-- AND WORLD--
--YOU DREAMED OF.
'CAUSE, FOLKS, YOU MORE THAN EARNED IT!


AN', ALI-GIRL--
--SWEET, DARLIN' DAZZLER--
--THIS ONE'S FOR YOU!
NEXT: DOWN UNDER!

MINUTEMEN
Bluntman